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GRADES 6 TO 12

Essential Practices for Literacy Instruction in the Secondary Social Studies Classroom

Deliberate, research-supported efforts to motivate, engage, and and support reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing in social studies

1. Inquiry-based instruction

Develop and implement interactive inquiry based units of instruction that frame social science problems or questions to help establish purposes for students to read and write beyond being assigned or expected to do so (e.g. for their enjoyment/interest, to ask and answer their questions about the social world including their community and individual lives, to address needs in their community or beyond, to communicate with a specific audience, or to explore issues of equity, social justice, and/or identity).

Within these inquiry-based units, the teacher:

- engages students in developing and asking questions, as well as planning inquiries about history, politics, economics, geography, and the social world.
  - ❖ also discusses the role of supporting questions in the inquiry process and supports students to generate new, compelling questions during an inquiry
- engages students in disciplinary specific (e.g. historical, political, economic, sociological, or geographic) thinking.
- helps students make sense of historical, political, economic, and social problems at different scales (e.g. temporal or spatial), and make conjectures about possible solutions.

- helps students see social science connections to their lives by reading and engaging in real-world and/or issue based investigations.
- creates opportunities for students to enact literate identities connected to social science learning and communication, drawing from both within and outside of school literacy practices (e.g. gives students opportunities be social science authors by having them create historical texts and present them to younger students).
- provides regular opportunities for students to make choices in their reading, writing, and communication.
- offers regular opportunities for students to collaborate with peers in reading and writing, such as through small-group discussion of texts on questions of interest and opportunities to write within group projects.
- provides scaffolded support to students as needed to assist them in developing their literacy proficiencies, removing supports over time to generate more independence.
- differentiates instructional processes and product expectations to account for varying academic needs and capabilities and appropriately challenge all students.

Bain, R. (2005, January). They thought the world was flat? Applying the principles of how people learn in teaching high school history. In Donovan, S. & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *How Students Learn: History, Mathematics, and Science in the Classroom*, pp.179-214. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.

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2. Diverse texts and abundant reading opportunities in the school

The teacher:

- engages students with texts that provide entry way into investigations of compelling issues or social science problems.

- provides students access to a range of texts about a similar problem or topic within a specific investigation, but also to varying texts across the span of a school year.

- provides access and regular opportunities to work with:

  - ❖ a wide range of social studies texts authentic to the different social science disciplines (i.e. print, audio, visual, and multimodal) including primary, secondary and tertiary texts.

  - ❖ texts of varying complexity, structure, and format or genre (e.g. informational texts, maps, biographies, articles, photographs, videos, charts or tables, historical novels, poetry and comics/cartoons).

  - ❖ a wide range of texts that help students see the social sciences as connected to their interests and that reflect their backgrounds and cultural experiences.

  - ❖ texts that allow students to reflect on their own identities as well as texts that engage them in exploring identities different than their own.

  - ❖ online texts, databases, and tools in the service of investigations.

notes _____

Afflerbach, P. & VanSledright, B. (2001, May). Hath! Doth! What? Middle graders reading innovative history text. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, vol. 44, no. 8, pp. 696-707.

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3. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary reading

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for reading in social studies (see recommendation #1 above).

- explicitly names, describes, and models the dispositions, strategies, and patterns of thinking typical of the social sciences.

- teaches students to apply disciplinary tools and concepts when working with text.

  - ❖ e.g. models through think-alouds how to ask questions of texts (e.g. routinely ask students to question the author's stance, perspective, historical or social context and motives, and resulting bias).

  - ❖ e.g. teaches students to ask the following questions to determine the source of a document:

    - ■ who produced (wrote, drew, or narrated) this text? What was their purpose and audience?(sourcing)

    - ■ when was this text produced? (contextualization)

    - ■ what was the historical, social, or cultural context in which this text was produced? (contextualization)

  - ❖ regularly models and coaches students in critical reading practices relevant to the social studies:

    - ■ models how to compare text-based accounts and look for similarities and differences (i.e. corroborating).

- teaches students to evaluate sources and gather and use evidence from multiple sources, including multimodal and digital texts in the context of an investigation or inquiry

  - ❖ helps students learn to evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.

  - ❖ helps students learn to identify and critique the claims of others.

  - ❖ collects data or gathers accounts with students.

  - ❖ supports youth in substantiating and determining the significance of data they locate through different sources(digital and physical).

  - ❖ models how to discern patterns and relationships (e.g. cause and effect) across data, accounts, or explanations.

3. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary reading (continued)

❖ teaches students how to record and organize important ideas or facts generated from analysis of data, images, textual evidence, etc. in research.

• scaffolds reading activities as appropriate using a range of strategies.

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Afflerbach, P. & VanSledright, B. (2001, May). Hath! Doth! What? Middle graders reading innovative history text. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, vol. 44, no. 8, pp. 696-707.

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Learning to read and write in history by focusing on evidence, perspective, and interpretation. *Curriculum Inquiry* 41(2).

Reisman, A. (2012). Reading like a historian: A document-based history curriculum intervention in urban high schools. *Cognition and Instruction* 30(1).

4. Intentional and standards-aligned instruction in disciplinary writing

The teacher:

• establishes compelling reasons for writing and communicating in social studies (see recommendation #1 above).

• engages students in writing to process and analyze primary, secondary, and tertiary texts.

• explicitly names, describes, and models the dispositions, strategies, and patterns of thinking typical of social studies.

❖ provides instruction in discipline-specific writing processes, strategies, and conventions, and attention as to why those writing norms exist in the discipline, particularly those involving researching, planning, and revising historical accounts and making social science arguments in other social science disciplines (e.g. the need to revisit and refine claims in light of new evidence encountered in an inquiry).

❖ provides opportunities to study models of, and write a variety of, texts for different purposes and audiences, particularly historical accounts or arguments, other social science arguments, as well as other informative/explanatory, and narrative texts.

• teaches students to apply disciplinary tools and concepts when producing text and communication (e.g. establishing historical or political significance for an event being discussed or written about).

• teaches students to gather and organize evidence to support and communicate social science arguments.

• provides students scaffolded opportunities to explore and use different text features (e.g. headings; table of contents; glossary, etc.) and text structures (cause and effect; problem / solution; sequence of events; etc.) in their writing about social science questions and ideas.

• provides explicit instruction as needed in writing mechanics and other standards-aligned content.

• provides regular time for students to write, both formally and informally, aligned with instructional practice #1 above.

• engages students in using both paper/pencil and digital media tools to practice historical and other social science research.

• provides opportunities for students to practice using written language (e.g., letters to editors, document-based essays) to make their conclusions public, or to critique the claims or conclusions of others.

• provides opportunities for students to develop and share multimodal and digital communications authentic to the social studies, including as a means to take informed action around public policy and/or social justice issues.

• moves students to independent levels of research, reading, and writing about inquiry based questions chosen by themselves and/or their instructors

• scaffolds writing activities as appropriate using a range of strategies.

De La Paz, S., Felton, M., Monte-Sano, C., et. al. (2014). Developing historical reading and writing with adolescent readers: Effects on student learning. *Theory & Research in Social Education* 42(2).

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5. Higher-order discussion of increasingly complex text across varying participation structures

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for engaging in discussion of text (see recommendation #1 above), including texts produced by students.

- allocates time for whole-group, small-group, and pair discussion of text, and uses a range of discussion and grouping strategies.

- poses questions that foster textual understanding and higher-order engagement with text (e.g. questions that move students beyond literal understanding into inferential and extended thinking about ideas in text).

- provides modeling and instruction to teach students how to generate their own higher level questions about texts.

- engages students in discussion of text genres, structures, and language practices of the discipline.

- teaches students how to engage in productive discussions, including discussion moves appropriate to the social sciences (e.g. routinely asking students to question the author's stance, perspective, historical or social context and motives, and resulting bias).

- supports students to read and discuss artifacts and data sources that historians and other social scientists would use to build social scientific arguments.

- has students use evidence from the past or from social science theory or research in discussions.

- has students read and discuss the findings of multiple social science accounts.

- engages students with reading secondary sources (work produced by actual social scientists) and also consult tertiary sources (textbooks, maps, and other reference materials) for chronology and spatial framing to prepare for discussions.

- helps students learn to connect facts and events to larger patterns, schemes and/or concepts in their talk and discussions.

- uses discussions to support students to produce their own social scientific arguments and narratives.

- supports students to explain or connect real world events/trends from a social science perspective using social science language.

- develops productive discussions that surface students' misconceptions about social science topics, concepts, or issues, and that engage students in communicating and critiquing conclusions.

- engages students in discussion around digital and media literacies, and engages students in dialogue through digital tools to share and communicate ideas and take informed action.

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6. Opportunities for and instruction in speaking and listening

The teacher:

- establishes compelling reasons for presenting and listening to presentations about social science problems or questions.

- provides regular opportunities for students to listen and respond to oral presentations, including those that incorporate visual and quantitative information to make students' conclusions public (e.g., debates and presentations to external audiences).

- models and teaches strategies for effective oral communication in the social sciences.

- teaches students strategies for listening and responding to presentations.

- engages students in discussion of, and practice with, norms and strategies for engaging in civic discourse around a range of issues, including potentially controversial topics.

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Cazden, C. B. (2003). Classroom Discourse: Courtney B. Cazden and Sarah W. Beck. In *Handbook of discourse processes* (pp. 170-202). Routledge.

Bain, R. (2005, January). They thought the world was flat? Applying the principles of how people learn in teaching high school history. In Donovan, S. & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *How Students Learn: History, Mathematics, and Science in the Classroom*, pp.179-214. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.

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7. Intentional efforts to build vocabulary and conceptual knowledge

The teacher:

- presents vocabulary as language in use (as opposed to words from decontextualized lists).

- teaches multiple meanings or nuanced meanings of a word across different contexts and encourages students to use new words in meaningful contexts (e.g., discussion of texts, discussions of content area learning, semantic maps).

- provides repeated opportunities for students to review and use new vocabulary over time, including discussing ways that new vocabulary relate to one another and to students' existing conceptual knowledge.

- explicitly teaches words that build necessary knowledge for reading and writing texts of instruction

    ❖ engages students in morphemic analysis (i.e., analysis of the meaning of word parts) of unfamiliar vocabulary.

- selects Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words to teach using disciplinary texts of instruction.

- encourages talk about vocabulary among students, particularly during disciplinary learning and students' discussions of print or digital texts.

- encourages students to identify and explore new vocabulary independently and provides instruction to support this process.

Vaughn, S., Martinez, L. R., Linan-Thompson, S., Reutebuch, C. K., Carlson, C. D., & Francis, D. J. (2009). Enhancing social studies vocabulary and comprehension for seventh-grade English language learners: Findings from two experimental studies. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, *2*(4), 297-324.

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8. Ongoing observation and assessment of students' language and literacy development that informs their education

The teacher:

- engages in observation and assessment guided by:

    ❖ an understanding of language and literacy development (e.g. creating a range of assessment items guided by an understanding of the difference between literal comprehension and inferential comprehension of texts).

    ❖ an understanding of the student as a member of a cultural community.

    ❖ students' strengths, areas for improvement, and socioemotional needs.

    ❖ relevant standards documents.

- prioritizes observation and assessment that is closest to actual reading and writing.

    ❖ e.g. prioritizing student work/writing as data for making instructional decisions as opposed to relying on standardized test scores which can mask proficiencies and areas in need of development.

- administers assessments as one source of information to determine which students may need additional instructional supports.

- employs formative and diagnostic assessment tools as needed to inform specific instructional targets (e.g., assessing knowledge of specific vocabulary words taught, reading and writing strategies being used and not used) and engage in the instructional practices described in this document.

- provides students with timely and specific formative feedback to drive learning and disciplinary literacy development.

- involves students in the development of learning goals, as well as in supported, productive self and peer assessment / feedback.

- develops assessment that analyzes how students apply disciplinary tools, concepts, and literacy practices across relevant social science domains (civics, economics, geography, history).

    ❖ assesses students ability to evaluate sources, use evidence, and make evidence-based claims.

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9. Community networking to tap into available funds of knowledge in support of developing students' social science knowledge and identities

The teacher provides learning activities that:

- help students connect and build on their in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and identities.
  - ❖ connect social science learning to family and community histories, geographic patterns or features, economic and political decisions
  - ❖ tap into community activities and audiences to address social scientific concerns, particularly at local and state levels of government when appropriate.
  - ❖ connect to youth and popular cultural activities and concerns.
- leverage students' literacies, learning, and knowledge to benefit their school, district, and/or community (e.g. peer education, research fairs, student to student mentoring, service learning).
- invite people from occupations who use the social sciences (e.g. historians, economists, geographers, local government officials, law enforcement, or political scientists) to the classroom (either face-to-face or via digital tools) to work with and engage in conversation with students.
- connect to and engage with social science activities and spaces in local communities (museums, universities, community colleges, governmental agencies, monuments/memorials, historical societies, community based organizations, etc.).
- enable students to communicate conclusions to authentic audiences and take informed action on issues of public policy and/or social justice.
- honor the diversity of literacy practices and historical narratives in the school community.

Stockdill, D. & Moje, E. B. (2013). Adolescents as readers of social studies: Examining the relationship between youth's everyday and social studies literacies and learning. *Berkley Review of Education* 4(1): 35-68.

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10. Metadiscursive awareness within and across academic and cultural domains (attention to language use at the "meta" level, e.g. talking about talk)

The teacher:

- supports students to connect and build on their in-school and out-of-school literacy practices and ways with words by identifying language processes and discussing how language is used based on different purposes and audiences.
  - ❖ e.g. discussing the role of audience and purpose with students by having them compare how they communicate with friends about an issue or problem to how they might communicate about the same topic with an authority figure like a principal, and then using this discussion to help them think about other comparisons like the differences between writing a text message and writing an academic paper. The goal is to make them aware of how language can and should shift in different contexts.
- engages students in high level discussion about ways with words within and across the disciplines.
  - ❖ e.g. discussing how and why the meaning of a word like product changes in meaning across academic contexts
  - ❖ e.g. noting how the use of first person in writing changes across academic disciplines and genres
- provides learning activities that teach students to evaluate how language is used in powerful and effective ways in the discipline based on the purpose, audience, historical and social context, and genre of the text.
  - ❖ e.g. having students analyze important, influential texts in the discipline (e.g. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech) and discuss why and how and why that particular text made an impact, with an emphasis on the use of language
  - ❖ e.g. teaching students about the standards of evidence in the disciplines of the social sciences and using these to create powerful arguments

Achugar, M., & Stainton, C. (2010). Learning history and learning language: Focusing on language in historical explanations to support english language learners. In *Instructional explanations in the disciplines* (pp. 145-169). Springer, Boston, MA.

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