

# Best Practices in Social Sciences in Beaverton School District (DRAFT)

January 2021

*Web Version*

The Social Sciences Best Practices document summarizes research-based strategies for Social Sciences instruction in alignment with the 5 Dimensions (5D™)\* of Teaching and Learning. This document was constructed and reviewed based on instructional practices from research and various professional resources by Social Sciences content specialists as well as expert teachers, representing the entire K-12 grade range. It is our belief that through the implementation of these practices, we can achieve our mission and vision for K-12 Social Sciences education in Beaverton.

\*“The 5D™ instructional framework provides a common language of instruction that defines teaching and learning along five dimensions: purpose, student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment for student learning, and classroom environment and culture.”

Suggestions on how this document can be used:

- Guide personal and professional growth plan(s) as a Social Sciences teacher
- Guide professional development and professional learning choices
- Support grade level collaboration and unit development and reflection
- Professional and collaborative reflection:
  - How does this look in my classroom?
  - To me, this means...
  - I'm curious about...
  - What does this tell me about what I can add or change in my classroom this year?

**1- Purpose:** The purpose of Social Sciences education is not simply to study the world, but to change it. We believe that the Social Sciences play a central role in preparing students for empowered civic engagement and responsible participation with and in their local, national, and global communities.

## **Standards**

- a. Content and context rich expectations: Oregon's 2021 Social Sciences standards engage students within and across the domains of Civics and Government, Geography, Historical Knowledge and Historical Thinking, Economics and Financial Literacy, Social Science Analysis, and Multicultural and Ethnic Studies.

## **Learning Targets and Teaching Points:**

- a. Coming soon (momentum towards having 4 major ALTs knowledge, critical thinking, research, communication with more specific standards-based ASTs).

**2- Classroom Environment and Culture:** Social Sciences classrooms are welcoming and inclusive for students and staff of all backgrounds, cultures and abilities. Different and multiple perspectives and voices are welcomed, heard, discussed and deliberated upon to ensure a classroom culture that is adaptable, responsive, and dynamic.

## Use of Physical Environment

- a. Physical arrangement of the room (e.g., intentional meeting areas, available resources, varied student seating, physical accessibility, etc.) communicates to students that both student collaboration and developing independence and self-reflection is valued.
  1. Accessibility: Classroom accessibility includes physical accessibility and responsiveness for students with disabilities, as well as proper equipment to increase students' comfort and chances for success.
- b. Visual materials (i.e. libraries, maps, posters, etc.) examine the histories, contributions, resilience and resistance, and perspectives of many racial, ethnic, and social groups - past and present - through an authentic, anti-biased/antiracist lens.

## Classroom Routines and Rituals

- a. Student agency, ownership, and community: Classroom routines and rituals foster student ownership and responsibility, reflect the values of community, and share accountability for learning.

## Classroom Culture

- a. Inclusivity: The classroom is an inclusive environment in which students identify themselves as valuable members and use their lived experiences and academic, social, and emotional strengths in the classroom, school, and community.
- b. Valuing diversity and knowledge: Classroom culture values individual and cultural diversity, students' prior knowledge and lived experiences, and students' heritage languages as strengths that must be used to further develop their academic, social, emotional, cultural, and linguistic capabilities.
- c. Relationships: Educator builds meaningful relationships with students and families to better understand and empathize with different cultural funds of knowledge and lifeways.
- d. Classroom discourse and interactions reveal what is valued in the learning environment: student identity development and belonging, the development of skills and content knowledge, respect for thinking and intellectualism, a lens of criticality and anti-bias/antiracism, as well as joy in the celebration of learning, growth, action, and change. Educators should consistently model curiosity, humility, and what it means to be an active learner.

**3- Curriculum and Pedagogy**: Students are engaged through meaningful, culturally relevant, and inclusive curriculum and pedagogy that builds knowledge, critical thinking, research, and communication skills, which are the foundational and collaborative practices of social scientists in the real world. The curriculum provides opportunities for teachers to tailor rigorous and responsive instruction with respect to individual students' academic, developmental, social, emotional, cultural, and linguistic capabilities.

## Curriculum

- a. "Mirrors, windows and sliding-glass doors" Students see themselves, and the complexity of their identities and histories, as well as the identities and stories of others' histories, in the curriculum by exploring historical and current local, national and global events and issues from multiple and diverse racial, ethnic, and social perspectives. The future will be shaped by our students.

- b. Transdisciplinary, transferable skills: Curriculum includes purposeful opportunities to build transdisciplinary, transferable skills including knowledge-building (factual, conceptual, debatable), critical thinking and criticality (problem solving and anti-bias/antiracism), research (inquiry and investigation), and communication (reading, writing, speaking, listening).
- c. Critical literacies: Curriculum invites sustained student engagement through reading, writing, speaking, listening, discussion, debate, and deliberation that fosters critical thinking and evaluation of information and sources.
- d. Accessibility: The curriculum will be available and accessible to all students, including dual and multilingual students, students receiving special education services, and those who are navigating poverty and/or houselessness.
  - 1. As a dual language and multilingual school district, curricular materials and resources in multiple languages is an integral part of the instruction.

### **Teaching Approaches & Strategies**

- a. Culturally relevant teaching: Teaching approaches and strategies are culturally relevant and help students identify and dismantle injustice and foster more equity in their communities and world. This includes:
  - 1. Validating students' lived experiences and values
  - 2. Disrupting power dynamics that privilege dominant groups and perspectives
  - 3. Empowering students to connect to experiences beyond their own, to examine their own perspective and privilege, and to develop a historical and contemporary sociopolitical consciousness of the world around them.
- b. Multiple and diverse learning opportunities: Teacher provides a variety of opportunities to access curriculum and expand entry points, while utilizing creativity in the utilization of resources and creation and facilitation of formative and summative assessments.
- c. Civic engagement and responsible democratic participation is sought out in day-to-day learning and objectives as well as the long-term learning and objectives by cultivating student voice, inquiry, action, and agency to establish relevance.

### **Scaffolds and/or Adjustments for Learning**

- a. Use of ongoing diagnostic and formative assessment: Teacher conducts ongoing diagnostic, formative assessments so that they and their students have a working knowledge of where student current understanding and skill development is in relation to the learning target(s).
  - 1. Multiple opportunities in a variety of modalities should be provided for students across and within the learning targets.
  - 2. Opportunities should be accessible to students who are working towards a non-standard diploma.
- b. Student interest and choice will help develop engaging, responsive, and dynamic scaffolds that are adjusted as students participate in meaning-making and increasingly assume ownership for their own learning.
- c. Language acquisition: Scaffolds include multiple opportunities and formats for students to build their academic language skills, including in ways that their authentic voice and home language is honored. All classrooms should work towards honoring and actualizing BSD's best practices for multilingual learners.

**4- Student Engagement:** The Social Sciences engage students as critical consumers, producers of knowledge, and future leaders. Engagement is strongest when students recognize and analyze historical and contemporary community and societal problems, ask critical questions and develop research investigations, separate evidence-based claims from opinions, and evaluate the usefulness and degree of reliability of different historical and current sources. Rich learning and engagement involves students working and growing together through intellectual and emotional engagement, as well as ethical reflection and civic agency as their learning connects to their local community and beyond.

### **Intellectual Work**

- a. Essential knowledge and skills: Students will engage in developing factual-conceptual-debatable knowledge,<sup>[1]</sup> research and inquiry skills, critical and analytical thinking, and communication skills. Intellectual work is conducive to participatory civic engagement and responsible participation with and in local and global communities.
- b. Bias and perspective: Teachers and students consider the dynamic nature of knowledge and perspective while developing critical thinking habits, and acknowledging bias and positionality and respecting cultural norms and perspectives.
- c. In-depth opportunities: Students should have frequent opportunities to investigate subjects in depth and to participate in choosing topics and modes of learning.
- d. Independent investigations and authentic audiences: Classroom learning should include both independent investigation as well as cooperative learning, and opportunities should foster student agency, specifically regarding self-advocacy and collective action. Opportunities to present work to authentic audiences within and beyond buildings is highly encouraged.

### **Engagement Strategies**

- a. Culturally Relevant: Engagement strategies begin by teachers exploring/identifying their own biases. Culturally relevant teaching asks teachers to embrace student background and experience. It is essential that we understand the beliefs, practices, ideologies, and experiences that shape our students' worldviews.
- b. Student backgrounds: Engagement strategies capitalize on and build upon students' background and language to support rigorous and culturally relevant learning.
- c. Multiple levels of participation: Empowering Social Sciences pedagogy meaningfully and inclusively invites students to engage at several levels: identity and self, school and family, neighborhood and community, local and regional history, state and national history, and world history.
- d. Cooperative and collaborative learning: Social Sciences classrooms are active, dynamic learning spaces filled with rich cooperative and collaborative learning, inquiry, and student collaborative conversations, deliberation, and reasoning.

### **Discourse & Communication**

- a. Inclusive: Social Science classes must be inclusive, dynamic, and affirming places where all students and staff of all backgrounds, cultures, and abilities feel welcomed, valued, challenged, and heard. This is evidenced by rich and varied opportunities for student discourse and communication with high levels of student engagement and participation. Intentionality in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical components of a functioning democracy.

- b. High Expectations: Classroom discourse and interactions reflect high expectations and beliefs about all students' capabilities - academic, social, emotional, cultural, and linguistic - and create a culture of belonging, equity and accountability for learning. This is evidenced by elevated and engaged student discourse and collaboration.
- c. Student-centered: Talk is student centered, i.e. 80% student talk to 20% teacher talk, with academic language support and intentional planning for rigorous academic discourse that allows students multiple opportunities to practice talking about a topic or issue.
  - 1. Student-student collaborative conversations are conducive to the real-world relevance and work of social scientists (building knowledge, critical thinking, research, and communication skills), and are strongest when connected and relevant to students' local community and beyond.

**5. Assessment for Student Learning:** The use of varied, frequent diagnostic, formative, self, and summative assessments in Social Sciences classes facilitates student growth towards the goal of meeting and exceeding the expectations of the Oregon Social Sciences Standards. A multi-faceted approach gives students more opportunities to demonstrate what they know.

### **Assessments**

- a. Self-assessment: Students assess their own learning in relation to the learning target, as well as knowledge and skill development, and reflect and set goals based on teacher and peer feedback.
- b. Multiple opportunities: There is an expectation that all students are given and receive feedback on multiple assessment opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
- c. Varied methods of assessment: Assessment methods (formative and summative) include a variety of approaches to gather comprehensive and quality information while leveraging the strengths of different learning styles and funds of knowledge. Assessments should be designed to meet the needs of each student, including incorporating multiple modalities (e.g., anecdotal notes, conferring, student work samples, etc.).

### **Formative Assessment and Adjustments**

- a. Ongoing Feedback and Adjustment: Teachers utilize feedback and ongoing formative assessment to adjust supports for students, to ensure more responsive communication, to redirect instruction, and to assist with student self-reflection, evaluation, and goal setting.
- b. Culturally Sustaining Practices: Assessments consider students' languages, heritage languages, culture, personal funds of knowledge, and other background factors when analyzing and/or creating assessments. Assessments are analyzed to reduce and eliminate biases including stereotypes, assumptions about pre-existing background knowledge, and barriers to accessibility.

### **Alignment to Oregon State Standards**

- a. Assessments are aligned to Oregon State Standards and BSD Learning Targets, and within the domains of Civics and Government, Geography, Historical Knowledge and Historical Thinking, Economics and Financial Literacy, Social Science Analysis, and Multicultural and Ethnic Studies.