

SOCIAL STUDIES BEST PRACTICES: What is the Focus?

Date:	Course/Content:
Time:	Subject:
Grade:	Focus:
1. Focus on Curriculum a. What Organizing Principle is evident to students? b. What Essential Questions are evident to students? 1. 2. 3.	
2. Focus on Instruction (you should check more than one) a. Identify Instructional Activity/Methods ☐ Analyzing Documents (Primary or Secondary) ☐ Cooperative Learning or ☐ Groupwork ☐ Debate ☐ Discussion ☐ Document-Based Question (DBQ) ☐ Formative Assessment ☐ Historical Writing (& Authentic Writing) ☐ Lecture & Note-taking ☐ Lecture & Discussion ☐ Multiple-Intelligence Activities ☐ Reading & Note-Taking (Cornell, Dialectical, etc) ☐ Preview / Process Activities ☐ Reading Historical Fiction ☐ Role-Playing / Simulation ☐ Spiral Questioning/Scaffolding ☐ Student Presentation ☐ Student Research ☐ Viewing Video (w/ note-taking, etc) ☐ Vocabulary/Concept Building ☐ Web-based Instruction (e.g. Virtual Field Trip, Web Quests) Other:	
3. Focus on the Level of Instruction/Assessment ☐ Level 1 (knowledge, understanding, application) ☐ Level 2 (inference/drawing conclusions) ☐ Level 3 (interpretation, evaluation)	
Additional Observations: 	

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CURRICULUM

Organizing Principle – the OP is the overarching theme for a unit of instruction. It is similar to a thesis in an essay in that it lets students know what the teacher is trying to teach them and shows them the position the teacher is taking on the theme at hand. At the end of the unit of instruction students should be able to make sense out of the OP and respond to it as if it were an essay question.

Essential Question – EQ's are questions related to the Organizing Principle teachers should focus on during daily instruction. Teachers may concentrate on different topics on different days so the EQ's may change from day to day. Students should be able to answer the EQ's as instruction progresses.

INSTRUCTION

Cooperative Learning – a task that requires each student within a group to complete a specific role that is important to the conclusion of the assignment. Groupwork – when multiple students work together but each has the same task.

Document – can be an original historical document (from the time period being studied), or second-hand (written or created after the fact by an outside observer). Documents can include readings, political cartoons, works of art, music, speeches, maps, etc. Document analysis requires comprehension and analysis of readings and other items – effective SS literacy strategies include SOAPStone, APPARTS, and other document analysis sheets.

Document-Based Question (DBQ) – a DBQ asks students to respond to an essay question by using information from a series of primary and secondary documents as well as from their own knowledge about a subject. The result is normally an extended essay, debate, or related project.

Multiple-Intelligence Activities – MI activities are designed to stimulate two or more of the students' multiple intelligences during the course of a lesson (i.e. verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal).

Preview & Process Assignments – the purpose of process assignments is to activate prior knowledge/experience to help students focus in on the upcoming topic of instruction. Previews can come in the form of a short writing assignment or an experiential exercise. Process assignments occur at the end of instruction/lesson and tap into the meta-cognitive domain. They allow students to synthesize and apply what they have learned. Process assignments can involve writing (essays or authentic writing assignments), culminating projects, etc.

Spiral Questioning – a step-by-step questioning method that progresses from lower level to analytical questions; this process ensures students have necessary background information (building blocks) to respond to upper level questions (L1 = knowledge, understanding; L2 inference, drawing conclusions; L3 interpretation, evaluation).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Video should be used judiciously. Short segments targeted to a specific topic work best, although there may be an instance where a powerful video may be in order. Students should be actively viewing – they should answer some type of preview question(s), and they should take notes or respond to questions during or after the video.

Using worksheets or having students answer questions from a textbook in class should be limited. The same holds true for vocabulary development that involves students defining terms. Students do not need teachers in the classroom to answer questions from a book or to define terms. A substitute can handle that. The expert, the teacher, should use valuable class time with students to engage in meaningful activities/discussions that require teacher expertise.

Homework should be targeted and meaningful – see Robert Marzano's and Debra Pickering's paper entitled, "The Case for and Against Homework. (**Educational Leadership**, March 2007, Volume 64, Number 6, Pages 74-79) article available online at <http://www.marzanoandassociates.com/pdf/homework.pdf>