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| **BEST PRACTICE IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES** |
| **Increase** | **Decrease** |
| In-depth study of topics in each social studies field in which students make choices about what to study, and discover the complexities of human interaction | Cursory coverage of lock-step curriculum that includes everything but allows no time for deeper understanding of topics |
| Emphasis on activities that engage students in inquiry and problem solving about significant human issues | Memorization of isolated facts in textbooks |
| Student decision-making and participation in wider social, political, and economic affairs, so that they share a sense of responsibility for the welfare of their school and community | Isolation from the actual exercise of responsible citizenship; emphasis only on reading about citizenship or future participation in the larger social and political world |
| Participation in interactive and cooperative classroom study process that bring together students of all ability levels | Lecture classes in which students sit passivelyClasses in which students of lower ability levels are deprived of the knowledge and learning opportunities that other students receive |
| Integration of social studies with other areas of the curriculum | Narrowing social studies activity to include only textbook reading and test taking |
| Richer content in elementary grades, building on the prior knowledge children bring to social studies topics including:* concepts from psychology, sociology, economics, and political science, as well as geography and history
* American social institutions
* issues for social groups
* the environment that surrounds them
 | Assumption that students are ignorant or uninterested in issues raised in social studiesPostponement of significant curriculum until secondary grades |
| Students’ valuing, and sense of connection with, American and global history, the history and culture of diverse social groups, and the environment that surrounds them | Use of curriculum restricted to only one, dominant cultural heritage |
| Students’ inquiry about the cultural groups they belong to, and others represented in their school and community, to promote students’ sense of ownership in the social studies curriculum | Use of curriculum that leaves students disconnected from, and unexcited about social studies topics |
| Use of evaluation that involves further learning and that promotes responsible citizenship and open expression of ideas | Assessments only at the end of a unit or grading period; assessments that test only factual knowledge or memorization of textbook information |

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| **BEST PRACTICE IN EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT** |
| **Increase** | **Decrease** |
| The use of formative evaluations/assessments to understand student growth and direct instruction to increase their learning  | The use of summative evaluations which quantify what has been learned up to a given point to score students against each other |
| Use of evaluations that provide descriptive or narrative information to student and parents | Use of evaluations that produce scores or numerical grades |
| Student involvement in record-keeping and evaluating their own work | The role of the teacher as the sole evaluator of student work and keeper of the grades |
| Use of varied assessments to evaluate students from many angles, by drawing on observations, conversations, performances, etc | Use of multiple-choice, true-false tests at the end of units or grading periods to produce a record of student learning |
| Integration of evaluations and assessments into instruction through:* teacher-student conferences
* learning logs
* student self evaluation
* student records/reflections on their work
* questionnaires
* performances to demonstrate learning
* open-response questions
* projects with several interval products
* peer conferencing
 | Use of paper pencil assessments as primary tool and evaluations only at end of units or as isolated activities  |
| Quality of information from evaluations/ assessments of learning and needs so they may be used in moderation to prevent consuming too much instructional or professional time  | Use of assessments that give too little information about student learning and needsUse of assessments for purposes other than increasing student learning.  |
| Use of grading systems that emphasize and support mastery of content/ processes/skills. Emphasis on criterion-referenced grading systems with standards defined through established performance levels for demonstrating knowledge of content, processes, and skills  | Competitive, norm-referenced grading systems |
| Student conferencing to discuss student learning, growth, and needs | Students receive all information about growth and needs from numerical scores on work, assessments, grade reports |
| Parent conferencing to communicate student learning, growth, and needsParent programs to help community members understand the value of new approaches. | Parents receive all information about student progress and needs from numerical grades on papers, assessments, and grade reports |

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| **BEST PRACTICES ACROSS CONTENT AREAS**  |
| **Increase** | **Decrease** |
| Experiential, inductive, hands-on learning | Whole-class, teacher directed instruction, e.g., lecturing |
| Active learning in the classroom signified by increased student conversation, movement, collaboration, doing, experiencing, and performing | Student passivity: sitting, listening, receiving, and absorbing informationPrizing and rewarding silence in the classroom |
| Emphasis on higher-order thinking; learning a field’s key concepts and principals | Classroom time devoted to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, workbooks, or other seat work |
| Deep study of a smaller number of topics, so that students internalize the field’s way of inquiry | Attempts to cover large amounts of material in a very superficial way to complete all of the chapters in the textbook |
| Time devoted to reading whole, original, real books and nonfiction material | Time devoted to reading textbooks and basal readers |
| Responsibility transferred to students for their work: goal-setting, record-keeping, monitoring, evaluation  | Emphasis on competition and grades over learning  |
| Choice for students; e.g., picking their own books, writing topics, team partners, research projects | Teacher-directed activities |
| Enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy in school; involving students in decisions that affect them | Actions and decisions that do not include student input |
| Attention to affective needs and the varying cognitive styles of individual students | Emphasis on one instructional style and strategies that are not differentiated  |
| Cooperative, collaborative activity; developing the classroom as an interdependent community | Emphasis on independent or individual work products |
| Heterogeneously grouped classrooms where individual needs are met through inherently individualized activities, not segregation of bodies | Tracking or leveling students into “ability groups” |
| Delivery of special help to students in regular classrooms | Pull-out special programs |
| Reliance upon teachers’ descriptive evaluation of student growth, including qualitative/ anecdotal observations | Use of and reliance on standardized tests |