IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICE LITERACY INSTRUCTION INTO A MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

By

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Guiding and developing a new direction for my Collaborative Team (Professional Learning Community) lead to the development of my essential question: How can best practice instruction support student engagement in a secondary (middle school) social studies class? I have had the opportunity to build a strong team as a Collaborative Team Leader (CT) for the past four years. Our social studies department was struggling to close the achievement gap and we were finding that many Black students were struggling with social studies classes. As a collaborative group, we knew that we needed to make a change and we decided after a few meetings that engagement was lacking for many of our students in some of our classrooms. Using grades as preliminary data we found that our Black students were not engaged in the material. I decided as their CT leader to focus on engagement and literacy skills in our content area. It was in these areas that we had success and failures that pushed me to further investigate engagement and literacy in a social studies classroom.

I found that there were four themes that I needed to research to understand how to best support social studies teachers. The four themes were literacy, best practice instruction, engagement, and reading to learn strategies. These four themes were derived from my background and journey as a teacher. Each of these stemmed from the struggles and success that my students encountered over their learning through my classroom. It was my own personal growth as a teacher and a learner that cultivated the need to support social studies classrooms with literacy beyond what was just expected. The creation of these themes was the culmination of the guiding question for my research.
To fill the void that my Collaborative Team was struggling to fill, I used this guiding question as an opportunity to create a website. This website was to best support all secondary social studies teachers with their own professional development as their own time allowed. This website was the key to not only supporting my own Collaborative Team but others in the same situation.

The website contains resources and examples to use for implementation of literacy in a social studies classroom. This project was selected based on the needs of social studies teachers struggling to find support with literacy in their classrooms. Social studies teachers lack the training and the support to tackle a strong literacy program and embed it within their content standards. The website offers that support.

I used the four themes of literacy, best practice instruction, engagement, and reading to learn strategies as the framework of the website. Using these themes would help me support the target audience and the implementation and structure of the material to explore with the website. The framework of the website offers information from beginning stages of implementation to high levels of implementation. The target audience is social studies teachers at the secondary (middle) level. Finally, the structure and implementation of the website supports the interface to be accessible to social studies teachers.

**Website information**

The website is located at: [https://sites.google.com/isd622.org/social-best-practices/purpose](https://sites.google.com/isd622.org/social-best-practices/purpose)

I structured the website into seven pages to scaffold the learning of the visitor to my site. The seven pages are: purpose, literacy, best practice instruction, engagement,
reading to learn, feedback, and resources. I built the site with this framework to help support not only beginning social studies teachers, but those that are experienced with social studies curriculum. My overarching goal was to provide an easy to follow learning experience that could be used for both in-depth learning and as a quick resource.

**Purpose.** The purpose page is the first page of the website (appendix A-Purpose). It outlines the reason why the site was created delivers the essential question for the project in the first paragraph. This page is strictly a beginning page for the user to start their journey through the website. I also added the list of hyperlinks to the center section of the page, to help with navigation and ease of use. Overall, the purpose page was developed to support any visitors that want to know more about literacy best practices in a social studies classroom and to help them understand the purpose of the website.

**Literacy.** The second page of the website is the literacy page (appendix B-Literacy). The visitor is given the definition of literacy and how to apply literacy to a social studies classroom. This page also has references related to the Common Core and different pathways to support the common core in a social studies classroom. While not everyone agrees with the Common Core, for my research purposes and the instructional strategies stated elsewhere in the website, it was important to define and give examples of why the Common Core is an effective support of literacy in a social studies classroom. I also provided the first resources necessary to fully understand and use this website to its potential as a resource to learn about literacy.

**Best Practice Instruction.** As the third page of this site, visitors have been exposed to my essential question and the definition of literacy (appendix C-Best Practice Instruction). The Best Practice Instruction page is the first experience for the visitors
where they can gather information to use in their own classrooms. The structure of this page is simple and is easy to implement as relational capacity, collaboration, and student-centered discussion activities are key pieces to help support quality instruction in the classroom. The focus of this page is to help the visitor know that student experiences and a strong classroom community is important to build and implement the strategies listed on the next few webpages. After viewing and implementing the activities on this page the visitor would be ready to move to the next steps of engagement.

**Engagement.** Student engagement in a classroom is difficult to measure, but it is one of the most important areas for supporting student success (appendix D-Engagement). The engagement page was added as a support structure to help provide activities and knowledge on why engagement is important to student learning. While engagement does not directly tie to literacy, teachers need to understand the research surrounding engagement to better understand how to engage their students and help support the community of learners they developed using the previous webpage. The engagement page provides research, activities, and different models of classrooms to give options to teachers working to sustain a strong and effective classroom environment.

**Reading to Learn.** The Reading to Learn page is the heart of this entire site (appendix E-Reading to Learn). The Reading to Learn page provides the reading strategies necessary to build a strong literacy curriculum in a social studies classroom. The strategies of close reading, inquiry, and student choice are each represented with research and activities. The second level of this page presents key ideas and the author’s craft as a tool to implement reading to learn strategies into a social studies classroom. As the nucleus of this site, this page will provide growth to new teachers as well as veteran
teachers with the information presented. The Reading to Learn page is the answer to
developing literacy in a social studies curriculum and the result to answer my essential
question.

**Feedback and Resources.** The final two pages of the website is the feedback
form and the resources used to create the site (appendix F-Feedback and G-Resources). I
added all the resources collected to best support any further learning from the visitors as
they reach the limits of this site. The feedback form will help support my own learning as
I add new information to the site and continue to support the development of literacy in a
social studies classroom as requested by the visitors to the site. The feedback form will
help guide new directions and new needs for social studies teachers.

The structure of the website was built to keep the visitor engaged and to provide
an effective use of time and learning. Keeping the pages in the order of purpose, literacy,
best practice instruction, engagement, reading to learn, feedback, and resources scaffolds
the new learning to the visitor. As the visitor clicks through each of the pages, a new
level of learning is created and new techniques to build student engagement in literacy
are delivered. While each page of the website has a specific role, the website supports
both new teachers and experienced teachers to develop or to support the development of
literacy in any secondary social studies classroom.

**Conclusion**

The website was the answer to my essential question of: How can best practice
literacy instruction support student engagement in a secondary (middle school) social
studies class? The website gives examples of each area of best practice, literacy,
engagement and reading to learn strategies in social studies classrooms. Each of these
areas also supports the research that was completed to give the visitor to the site the most current views on the topic of literacy in a social studies classroom. The research completed was done with purpose and consideration to support teachers to help them best support their students. Social studies teachers need professional development and support as they develop curriculum supporting literacy and engagement in their classrooms and this website fits that need. The overall goal is to help our students be more complete in literacy beyond language arts classrooms and with this website social studies teachers will be able to help complete that goal.
Appendix A - Purpose

Implementing Best Practice Literacy Instruction into a Social Studies Classroom

The purpose of this site is to help support secondary social studies teachers as they work to implement literacy instruction into their current curriculum. The site was created from the research question, "How can best practice instruction support student engagement in secondary social studies classes?" This site was created in fulfillment of a master's degree in literacy from Hamline University. While there was plenty of information regarding literacy in a language arts classroom, there was minimal research supporting a strong social studies literacy center in the classroom. This website addresses that gap in the core content of our middle school classrooms, but can be enhanced to support high school social studies content.
The research for this site was completed through thoughtful consideration of the tools and skills of many of our social studies teachers today. All resources used are linked on the resource page and in many cases are linked directly to the article or information.

Strategies: While each part can be studied and used independently, the goal is to implement all four to best support your social studies classrooms.

This site will focus on four main components: The implementation of literacy in a social studies classroom, best practice instruction, engagement, and reading to learn classes as well.

While there was plenty of information regarding literacy in language arts classrooms, there was minimal research supporting a strong social studies literacy-centered fulfillment of a master’s degree in literacy from Hampton University.

The research question of “How can best practice instruction support student engagement in a secondary (middle school) social studies classroom?” The question was created in the purpose of this site is to help support secondary social studies teachers as they work to implement literacy into their current curriculum. This site was created from
The Common Core is a primary and secondary education initiative to improve student achievement and prepare them for college and career.

Pathways to the Common Core

The teacher and the students with literacy in a social studies classroom. The teacher integrates literacy throughout the curriculum to support both the academic and the social-emotional development of students. This approach is based on research that shows positive outcomes for students who receive literacy instruction in social studies.

Literacy

In the world of education, literacy is everything and everywhere. All content areas are expected to support students’ literacy to create students that are lifelong learners.
Literacy instruction must bridge the gap left by language arts teachers and non-fiction text.
Literacy Instruction Must Bridge the Gap Left by Language Arts Teachers and Non-Literacy Texts

Students as they continue to build knowledge and process background knowledge.

Reading multiple perspectives (Fisher and Wray, 2000)" Literacy is critical to all subject areas, and instruction is going to be the cornerstone to the success of literacy in all areas (Fisher & Wray, 2000). Literacy instruction must bridge the gap left by language arts teachers and non-literacy text.

*Note: The text is cut off and not fully visible.*
Appendix C: Best Practice Instruction

Learning and literacy and social studies instruction. These work in unison to create a robust learning environment. Support every student's success in the classroom. Best instructional practices include: (1) deep learning; and (2) explicit instruction. Every day, a teacher is mindful of students and their learning trajectories. To best instructional practices, work to create a dynamic between students and educators, while working in conjunction to increase not only student development but the student's capacity.
Engagement strategies

Engagement

Build engagement in the classroom. Does making sense, also leave room for interpretation by the teacher. As social studies teachers, we have the ability to use video, images, text, and discussion protocols to make the difference between students that are engaged and those that are not. By the way, the students are reading in the current task view to them (pF: 15). While this effective way, the students is the only one that knows if they are engaged in the material and why. If they even mention they are engaged. Schüler (2011) believes that "Engaged learning is the cornerstone of knowing that lesson instructional practices are working and if the teacher is engaged. Student engagement is the teacher needs to measure in a classroom. It is difficult because students that "look engaged" might not be learning or those that "look
- Student Engagement in the Classroom
- Flipped Learning in the Classroom
- Collaboration Activities
- Collaborating Techniques

Levels of Engagement
Reading To Learn

Strategies to help the students build skills in literacy.

Appendix E: Reading To Learn
Key Ideas, Cred, and Structure

Close Reading: Bridge 6 Social Studies

The concomitant social studies

Purpose, Library, Best Practices, Engagement, Feedback, Resources, Reading to Learn, Reading, Bridge 6 Social Studies

Support student non-fiction reading in texts and resources. The following resources embrace the purpose of key ideas within the text. To make changes to the curriculum, effective social studies teachers need to...
Do you have any suggestions to add to the website?

* Agree  Agree  Agree  Agree  Disagree

1  2  3

The website provided valuable knowledge to support literacy in social studies.

* Agree  Agree  Agree  Agree  Disagree

1  2  3

The website supported literacy in social studies.

* Agree  Agree  Agree  Agree  Disagree

1  2  3

The website was easy to navigate.

* Agree  Agree  Agree  Agree  Disagree

1  2  3

Required
* Do you have any suggestions to add to the website?

* Agree

* Disagree

1. Agree

2. Disagree

3. Disagree
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