

Best Practices for a History Education Major

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Everyone in the group will end up teaching social studies in the near future. Social studies seeks to promote civic competence. The goal is to help students make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (Chapin, 2015). The theme that Santrock focuses for the area of constructivist approaches, saying how many social studies are taught in the traditional manner of a single text-book, with the teacher lecturing and controlling question-and-answer strategies. (Santrock, 379).

The idea of a constructivist approach is trying to get to the student enough for him/her to realize that this information can be useful not only in the classroom, but outside also. Teachers go on to guide students to consider ethical dimensions of topics and address controversial issues rather than directly telling students what is or is not ethical. The idea is to allow the students to produce their own ethical outlooks of the world and the current issues and past issues.

Another form a constructivist approach idea is to allow the students to create their own thoughts then you allow the students to try to put those ideals into words, and be able to turn those words into the ability to apply those to how you feel about more situations. Effective teachers recognize opposing points of view, show support for well-supported positions, demonstrate sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and are committed to social responsibility.

Best practices are methods teachers can use to help prepare students for a survival in a globally competitive world (Best Practices, 2006). The goal of best practices is to develop a love for education, an excellent work ethic, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Best Practices, 2006). Ways that best practices can take shape in a classroom is by having numerous books and

project materials ready for students to use to their full advantage. The classroom is also a place where project-based, or activity based, learning takes place more often than the traditional style of sitting and learning. Although lecture based teaching is needed at times to help lay the foundation of knowledge needed for the lesson/unit that is being taught. The reason for this is to create collaborative skills among the students and to help create an environment that students feel safe in. The students also know what the purpose is of what they are doing. Often students will get frustrated and shut down if they do not know why they are doing an assignment or project that challenges them. The environment of the classroom is filled with joy and energy by the students who are hopefully eager to learn. The reason why this should be a desire and strived for by using best practices is because no one wants to go somewhere that is boring and lifeless.

Best practices that teachers can use, that do not include what was previously stated, is teaching a balanced curriculum, integrating other subjects into the curriculum, differentiating the projects or activities, and providing active learning opportunities that do not have to be limited to inside the classroom (Best Practices). A balanced curriculum that a social studies teacher would use might look similar to an integrated curriculum. However, the difference between the two in a social studies classroom is that balanced curriculum would not focus solely on one subject. An example of this is in a US history class, instead of focusing solely on US history, it would look at what else was happening in the world at that time that influenced US history. Balanced curriculum helps to have students use their whole brain as well (Best Practices, 2006).

An integrated curriculum in a social studies classroom is bringing in different subjects of study such as art, math, science, geography, economics, political science, philosophy, etc. The reason why every teacher should use integrated curriculum is to help educate the whole student.

Integrated curriculum helps students form connections between what they are learning in one class and another class.

The goal of differentiating lessons, assignments, activities, and projects is to reach out to as many learning preferences that one can in order to create the most learning possible. The hope of using the practice of differentiation is to help nurture self-esteem and respect within one's classroom (Best Practices, 2006). This practice also helps build relationships with students by knowing their strengths and weaknesses (Best Practices, 2006). Differentiating curriculum also helps students utilize their strengths by allowing them to choose what they are most comfortable with. Differentiating curriculum helps students to create learning goals (Best Practices, 2006).

The last type of best practice that a teacher can use is providing active learning opportunities outside of the classroom. An active learning opportunity outside of the classroom might be taking the students to a museum and having them explore the museum. Then while the students are exploring the museum, by having them write down what they found to be interesting or learned while at the museum would be a way to see what the students are interested in. Another type of opportunity would be allowing students to go to an archive and help archive documents. The reason why having students archive documents gives them experience what it is like to be a historian. Not only do the students learn what it is like to be a historian, but the students also have exposure to primary documents in the form that they were written and not merely in the form of a pdf. By allowing students to have opportunities to learn outside of the classroom, one is able to help students make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and the real world. Which will hopefully in turn create the positive learning environment that all teachers strive to create.

References

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