

## Social Studies Philosophy

The discipline of Social Studies involves students as active and compassionate participants in local and global issues. By embracing the challenges of change, students will develop scholarship, leadership, and citizenship empowering them to respond to the complexities of today's world. As students expand their awareness from personal to societal to global, they think critically about the human condition and become motivated to change their lives.

Students learn Social Studies best by functioning as social scientists through ...

- Being curious and developing the desire to understand the world.
- Understanding the discipline's relevance in their lives.
- Acknowledging and resolving discrepancies and misconceptions after the examination of evidence.
- Developing social literacy through the process of actively engaging in social awareness.
- Accessing a variety of sources.
- Developing a variety of tools and strategies.
- Sharing their thinking, making connections between other social science disciplines, and examining multiple perspectives.
- Being involved in independent and collaborative inquiry.
- Demonstrating understanding of their actions.
- Developing a strong ethos of inquiry by reflecting, explaining, questioning, and defending positions.
- Refining values by reevaluating prior knowledge and experience.
- Exploring learning outside the regular classroom.
- Showing empathy with cultures or historical events.
- Making connections between the past and the present.
- Becoming contributory members in a tolerant learning environment where they feel safe taking risks.

Effective Social Studies teaching practices that promote student learning include:

- Establishing a safe environment where students can take risks and feel comfortable expressing themselves.
- Promoting a culture of thinking by empowering learners with the dispositions and thinking processes to develop deep understanding of Social Studies.
- Planning and implementing curriculum within which students apply the tools and processes of social scientists.
- Designing effective lessons that build on learners' prior experience and knowledge as well as planning for individual learning styles and needs.
- Providing students with opportunities for choice.
- Supporting and encouraging students to seek learning outside the classroom.
- Continually assessing in a variety of ways in order to understand learners' progress and to guide instruction.
- Pursuing professional development that reflects current research in social studies education to ensure the use of best practices.
- Using effective instructional tools that:
  - reinforce the writing process.
  - develop critical thinking skills by having students create questions, read for purpose, analyze texts, and evaluate evidence.
  - organize and facilitate individual and group activities.
  - foster leadership opportunities.
  - integrate student use of technology.
  - create hands-on activities.
  - use audio-visual materials.

- encourage student reflection through journals, commentary, blogs, discussion boards, and wikis.
- initiate student discussions, debates, role-playing, simulations, and presentations.
- teach research methods: developing a historical question, gathering information, using a variety of sources, and citing them.