The 5E Instructional Model for Social Studies

INQUIRY-DRIVEN LEARNING THAT BUILDS KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



1. ENGAGE

Spark curiosity and activate prior knowledge

PURPOSE

Introduce a compelling question, issue, or artifact that connects to students' lives and builds interest in the topic.

TEACHER STRATEGIES

- Use a provocative question, image, or short video
- Present a real-world issue or local connection
- Elicit and discuss what students already know or wonder

STUDENT ACTIONS

- Share initial ideas and questions
- Make predictions
- Connect the topic to their own experiences

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

Show a historical photograph and ask, "What do you notice? What do you wonder? What might be happening in this scene?"

2. EXPLORE

Investigate sources and multiple perspectives

PURPOSE

Allow students to explore evidence, gather information, and examine different viewpoints to build a deeper understanding of the topic.

TEACHER STRATEGIES

- Provide a variety of primary and secondary sources (texts, maps, artifacts, graphs, interviews)
- Organize inquiry stations or document analysis
- Facilitate collaborative investigation and discussion

STUDENT ACTIONS

- Analyze sources
- Ask and pursue questions
- Look for patterns, differences, and multiple perspectives
- Gather and record evidence

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

In small groups, students examine a set of primary sources about a historical event and record what each source reveals and what questions it raises.

3. EXPLAIN

Develop and clarify understanding

PURPOSE

Help students make sense of their findings, construct evidence-based explanations, and learn key concepts, vocabulary, and frameworks.

TEACHER STRATEGIES

- Facilitate whole-class or small-group discussions
- Guide students in using evidence to support claims
- Introduce and clarify key concepts, vocabulary, and historical thinking skills (e.g., cause and effect, continuity and change)

STUDENT ACTIONS

- Share and defend their ideas using evidence
- Build explanations
- Ask new questions and refine their understanding
- Use key vocabulary

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

Students create a class explanation (written, visual, or oral) that answers the compelling question using evidence from the sources.

4. ELABORATE

Apply learning to new situations

PURPOSE

Extend understanding by making connections to other time periods, places, or contemporary issues and by applying learning in new and meaningful ways.

TEACHER STRATEGIES

- Provide opportunities for comparison and connection
- Use case studies, simulations, or role-plays
- Encourage students to apply concepts to current events or local issues
- Support students in considering multiple perspectives and possible solutions

STUDENT ACTIONS

- Make connections across time, place, or issues
- Apply what they've learned to a new context
- Consider multiple perspectives
- Propose and discuss possible solutions

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

Students compare a historical event to a current issue and analyze how the past can inform decisions today.

5. EVALUATE

Demonstrate understanding and reflect on learning

PURPOSE

Assess student understanding, reasoning, and ability to use evidence, and provide opportunities for reflection and goal setting.

TEACHER STRATEGIES

- Use formative checks throughout the lesson
- Assess with authentic, evidence-based tasks
- Include opportunities for self- and peer-reflection
- Ask students to revisit the compelling question

STUDENT ACTIONS

- Demonstrate understanding through discussion, writing, presentations, or projects
- Use evidence to support claims
- Reflect on what they learned and what questions remain

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

Students create a short written argument, multimedia presentation, or civic action plan that responds to the compelling question using evidence from their investigation.

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