

History and Social Sciences: Instruction & Performance Assessment for English Learners

Make learning visible

- Establish content and connected language targets to support students in comparing, sequencing, justifying, explaining their thinking, etc.
- Use graphic organizers such as mind maps and Venn Diagrams to help students connect their ideas
- Draw attention to patterns and relationships in graphs, tables, timelines, and other visualizations
- Refer to written language models and examples to support language development and understanding of primary sources
- Use (and encourage students to use) motion to support understanding and retention of new concepts and key terms
- Post visual displays to cue memory and support written language



Use cooperative learning structures and strategies

- Structure opportunities for students to collaborate and communicate ideas and make meaning
- Have students work together to share what they notice and wonder about primary sources and to analyze political cartoons and historical images during authentic, hands-on activities
- Use strategies to support student engagement and disciplinary discourse
- Use flexible and fluid grouping of students



Support the language of history and social sciences

- Provide real-world contexts for students to build vocabulary and conceptual understanding
- Explicitly teach the language of history/social science beyond a focus on vocabulary to support conceptual understanding
- Provide sentence starters to support student communication of their perspectives, questions, thinking, analysis, evaluations, claims, and arguments



Reduce cognitive load and allow processing time

- Read tasks and texts out loud
- Model strategies for understanding complex, primary source texts
- Break tasks and prompts into smaller sections and organize the text using bullet points versus complex paragraphs
- Provide artifacts and visuals (images, maps, videos) to support the content of text; use political cartoons and historical images when possible to remove any reading barriers
- Use simple sentences and include only details needed to complete the task (when possible)
- Provide adequate and flexible thinking and processing time

Connect learning to students' backgrounds and skills

- Make connections between class concepts and everyday life
- Craft tasks and prompts that connect with students' lives and responsibilities
- Allow time and space for students to share their perspectives, hear others' perspectives, and make connections to a variety of perspectives in respectful ways
- Highlight developments and contributions from a variety of cultures (focusing on those of the ELs in the class, as possible)
- Facilitate opportunities for perspectives to be explained in student's home language



Prepare for Performance Tasks and Assessments

- Show and discuss models of past or related performance assessment products
- Explain the components of the rubric in easy-to-understand language
- Refer to previously reviewed anchor charts or sentence frames related to the rubric tasks (connect claim to evidence, describe trends and patterns)
- Allow beginning level ELs to respond in words and phrases or simple sentences to show their content understanding



High expectations, asset-based thinking, and a growth mindset are key to student success!

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