

Mapping your School Community

Getting to know your Place

Objectives

- Explore the relationship between people and the environment
- Identify community assets, as well as an environmental issue or sustainability challenge that students may want to address
- Develop inquiries that arise from exploring the local community
- Tell a story about students' findings using tools like drawings, maps, globes, charts, photographs, and online data sets

Essential Questions

- What and who make up our place?
- How does our community help us, and how can we help our community?
- What are your responsibilities to yourself, your community and the world?

Materials

- Large paper
- Crayons, colored pencils or markers

Background

Place-based education engages students in their local community and environment in a way that is meaningful and real. "Place" is used as a starting point to develop an interdisciplinary unit where local issues are leveraged to teach concepts in all subjects across the curriculum. This activity is intended to serve as a launch pad for students to collaborate on a project that investigates and responds to a problem/issue in the community. When students experience place-based learning in their local community, they begin to understand the complex interactions among economic, environmental and social factors, and through mapping and describing their maps, cultivate the skill of storytelling about their community.

GRADE LEVEL



MIDDLE - HIGH
SCHOOL

CONNECTIONS TO THE BIG IDEAS OF SUSTAINABILITY



PLACE



ABILITY TO MAKE
A DIFFERENCE



COMMUNITY

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS



SCIENCE:
EARTH AND
HUMAN ACTIVITY



SOCIAL STUDIES:
GEOGRAPHIC
REASONING, CIVIC
PARTICIPATION



ART:
CONNECTING

Activity

Teacher Note: This 2-part lesson can be facilitated as one long ~1.5 hour session, or two ~45 minute sessions

1. Split the class into small groups. Give each group a large piece of paper and colored pencils, crayons or markers. Have each group construct a map of the community around the school.
2. Prompts: How can we identify our community assets? Help students think more deeply about the community assets by including some of the following prompts.
 - a. Where do you have fun in the community?
 - b. Where is the nearest green space? Is there a stream, pond, lake, ocean, marsh, river, or swamp in your neighborhood?
 - c. Are there businesses near your school?
 - d. Where do you buy food in the community? Are there grocery stores and restaurants?
 - e. What are the government, religious, or official institutions in the community?
 - f. What are some special features (landmarks, monuments, statues, etc.) in your neighborhood?
 - g. Who are the indigenous people of the land? What are their land practices?
 - h. What is the history of your community? How does this history continue to shape the community today?
 - i. Who are the celebrated individuals in your community? What do they contribute to the community?
3. How can we identify issues/challenges in our community?
 - a. Are there things that need to be improved about the community?
 - b. Are there any services or spaces that are inaccessible for some members of the community? Why?
 - c. Do you notice a difference between this community and other communities you have visited, lived in, or explored?
 - d. What do you think can be improved in your community to help everyone and all living things have a safe and healthy life?
4. Gallery Walk: Once students have completed their maps, post them around the room. Give each student group post-its and inform them they will rotate to each map for 2 minutes. They can use their post-its to:
 - a. Add what they liked about the map
 - b. Ask clarifying questions
5. At the end of the gallery walk students return to their map and read the questions on the post-its.

Reflection Questions

- How were the maps similar or different?
- Why were some places more significant than others?
- What are places that all communities need?

Teacher note: Disparity and social inequity between communities will likely become apparent and further inquiry from the students may arise. As a teacher, it is important that you are also doing this process of exploring and reflecting on the communities surrounding your school so you are prepared to engage with the students around these tough questions and issues.

Part 2: Community Walk

Participants use the maps created in Part 1 to reflect on their relationship with their school and the surrounding neighborhood. They use their maps and the neighborhood walk to identify problems or concerns that can be improved.

You will need:

- Student Permission Slips for the walk
- Extra Parent or teacher to help with supervision on the walk
- Student maps previously created
- Crayons, colored pencils or markers

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be a community member?
- How can we help our community?
- What are your responsibilities to yourself, your community and the world?

Activity:

1. Your group will use your maps to measure the condition of your neighborhood and to point out positive and problem findings in your neighborhood. The group brings their maps, pencils on the walk
 - a. Students mark positive findings with a green pencil
 - b. Students mark problem findings with a red pencil
2. If you have already determined a focus for your walk (air pollution, water quality, traffic safety, trash, etc), have the students focus their observations on those conditions
 - a. Extension option: Encourage students to ask community members they see on their walk what they 1) value about their community, 2) think can be improved.
3. Your group should also keep track of the questions they have while walking around the neighborhood.
4. Back in the classroom create a class list of the positive and problem findings.

Debrief:

- What is our community made of?
- How do we depend on our community?
- What do we now know about our community that we didn't notice before?
- What else can we investigate to better understand some of the problems we addressed in order to devise potential solutions?

New York Standards

Social Studies Practices 5-8 Geographic reasoning:

- Use location terms and geographic representations, such as maps, photographs, satellite images, and models, to describe where places are in relation to each other, and to describe connections between places; evaluate the benefits of particular places for purposeful activities.
- Identify and analyze how environments affect human activities and how human activities affect physical environments

NYSSLS:

- MS-ESS3-3. Apply scientific principles to design a method for monitoring and minimizing a human impact on the environment.*

Texas Standards

TEKS - Science:

- 5.2 Scientific investigation and reasoning. The student uses scientific practices during laboratory and outdoor investigations. The student is expected to:
 - (C) - collect and record information using detailed observations and accurate measuring; (D) - analyze and interpret information to construct reasonable explanations from direct (observable) and indirect (inferred) evidence; (F) - communicate valid conclusions in both written and verbal forms; (G) - construct appropriate simple graphs, tables, maps and charts.
 - 6.3, 7.3, 8.3 (A) analyze, evaluate, and critique scientific explanations by using empirical evidence, logical reasoning, and experimental and observational testing, so as to encourage critical thinking by the student.
 - The student knows that interdependence occurs among living systems and the environment and that human activities can affect these systems. The student is expected to:
 - 8.11(A) - investigate how organisms and populations in an ecosystem depend on and may compete for biotic and abiotic factors.

TEKS - SS

- 5.6(A) - Geography. The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The student is expected to apply geographic tools, including legends, scales, and compass roses to construct and interpret maps.
- 5.9(A) - Geography. The student understands how people adapt to and modify their environment. The student is expected to describe how and why people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States to meet basic needs.
- 5.24(C), 6.20(C), 7.20(C), 8.29(C) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to organize and interpret information in maps.
- 7.9(A) - Geography. The student understands the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas. The student is expected to identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications