

Somewhere, USA: Creating a Community, Part I

Lesson Overview

In this lesson students decide where certain areas of a community should be located in an imaginary community and they construct a large bulletin board map to represent the community. The students make three-dimensional symbols to represent buildings which provide valuable community services, houses for neighborhoods, and recreational areas. The community bulletin board map can then be used for this and several optional extensions and subsequent lessons. It is not necessary to teach all of the parts of this lesson immediately following one another. The bulletin board remains in the classroom, and later segments of the lesson can proceed at any time the teacher chooses.

Grade Level

Primary

Duration

3-5 thirty minute class periods

Geography Theme

Location

- Location of places can be described using relative terms
- Reasons can be identified for the location of places

Geography Standards

The geographically informed person knows and understands...

(#1) how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

(#3) how to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

(#12) the processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

Materials Needed

For Teacher:

- Bulletin board covered with green paper and marked with streets

For Students:

- Small brown lunch bags stuffed with paper towels or newspaper and stapled closed (to be decorated as 3-dimensional buildings)
- Construction paper of various colors
- Glue, scissors, markers, stapler

Main Objectives of the Lesson

Students are expected to:

1. evaluate the need for particular goods, services, and varied land uses in a community;
2. make decisions about where to place various urban land uses in an imaginary community.

Suggested Teaching Procedure

Preparing for the Lesson

1. Read all parts of the lesson before beginning. For this part of the lesson the teacher will create a base map on the bulletin board using green background paper and white streets (see [attached sample](#)). Street names and cardinal directions will be added later. Make the map large enough so that all students will be able to place the buildings they create on the bulletin board map.
2. For younger children especially, and if space is available in the classroom, use the floor instead of or in addition to a bulletin board. The floor map is a more concrete representation, and it also allows changing the buildings around before finalizing the locations later in the lesson.
3. If [Part II](#) of the lesson is taught, space on the map should be left for physical features such as lakes, rivers or hills. If [Part IV](#) of this lesson is going to be taught, space will be needed for transportation facilities (bus stations, train stations, and the like), and these items should *not* be added to the community during this part of the lesson.

Opening the Lesson

1. Discuss human needs and wants with the students. On chart paper make a list of the needs and wants they mention. The list should include such things as education, health care, family, shelter, pets, transportation and the like.
2. Create a second column on the chart paper headed, "Where we meet those needs." Go back over each item and list the students' responses. Aim for a list of *buildings* under this heading such as schools, clinic, clothing factory, zoo, airport, gas station, and so on. More items will likely be added to the needs and wants list as the students suggest places.
3. Students will then choose from the list those buildings they think are most important. Have each student create a building (using stuffed lunch bags) found in a community (e.g., house, school, police station, store, factory, etc.) with construction paper and markers.

Developing the Lesson

1. Once the buildings are completed, students are asked to decide where the various buildings should be located given the mapped out streets on the prepared bulletin board. The teacher discusses the location of these buildings with the entire class prior to attaching the buildings. The key question is, "Why should this building go there?" The teacher wants to elicit such answers as, "The stores should all be located along one main street so it is easy for people to shop." When answers are not logical it may be helpful to remind students of their own community by saying such things as, "Think of your neighborhood, do you have an airport among your houses?"
2. Once students have reached consensus on the location of the buildings they should be stapled to the bulletin board or taped to the floor map.
3. Identify and label the cardinal directions North, South, East and West on the community map. Ask students to describe the relationship between places in the community using direction words (e.g., the school is south of the park, the library is east of the police station, etc.).

Concluding the Lesson

1. The students should study the completed map and make suggestions for changes or improvements. Students must give reasons and if the class agrees to the changes, they can be made until the students are satisfied with the design of their imaginary community.

Extending the Lesson

1. Take a photograph of the bulletin board and use the photograph to help create and duplicate page-sized maps of the bulletin board community. Duplicate maps so each student has one. Have the students create symbols to make a picture map of their imaginary community. Students should each make a map adding a compass rose and a key. Then the students should compare their maps with the bulletin board to determine similarities and differences.
2. Give the students a new building or land use to add to the community. Have each student select a location for it and put it on their maps in light pencil. Students can then share with a fellow student where he or she located the new item and why it was located there. Afterward, the full class can determine a final location and a three-dimensional representation can be added to the bulletin board as students draw it on their maps.
3. Keep the bulletin board display and encourage students to suggest new things be added to the community; discuss where, and add the item to both the bulletin board and the student maps.