

Local Activity: Community Mapping



THIS ACTIVITY IS A HANDS-ON WAY TO GET STUDENTS THINKING ABOUT THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT THEIR COMMUNITIES.

It's also a great way to get a feel for the issue(s) that your students can focus on for their local action(s), and is especially helpful for planning a campaign through WE Volunteer Now, WE Take Charge or WE Are One.

On **page 11** of the Student Yearbook there is a corresponding worksheet where students can make notes and write down responses to reflection questions. There is also a printable PDF online at WE.org/weschools/educator-resources.

PURPOSE:

Students will build on what they learned in the Exploring Issues activity (p. 30) to learn to identify the issues that affect their community by taking a walk around the neighbourhood and then mapping it out. Finally, they will create a plan to take action and give back to their community.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD(S):

Kinesthetic, class discussion, brainstorming, mapping and action planning.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION:

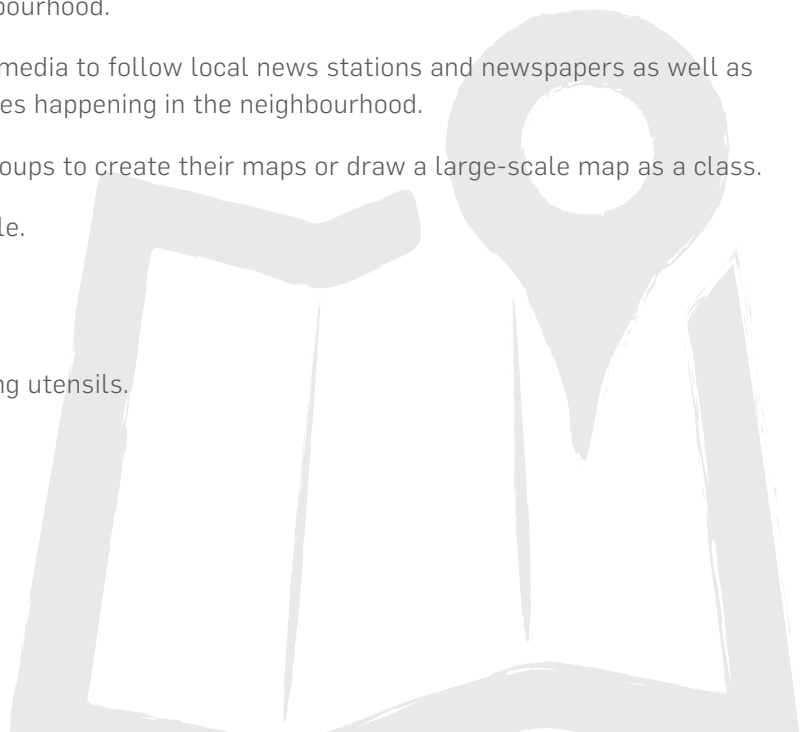
- ▶ Provide students with local newspapers and time to visit local news websites or watch local newscasts for information about what is going on in the neighbourhood.
- ▶ Use class accounts on Twitter and other social media to follow local news stations and newspapers as well as the local police divisions to learn about the issues happening in the neighbourhood.
- ▶ Have students make their own maps, work in groups to create their maps or draw a large-scale map as a class.
- ▶ Select one topic for the class to study as a whole.

MATERIALS:

Craft supplies for making a map, notebooks and writing utensils.

ESTIMATED TIME:

90 minutes.



STEPS:

1. Ask students if there are any issues such as homelessness, poverty or pollution in their community. How do they know what issues affect their community? Do they see, read or hear about them in the news? Do their parents discuss them at the dinner table?
2. Tell students that the class will be going on a community walk to look for signs of local issues. In preparation, have students brainstorm a list of indicators they might encounter as symptoms of a larger issue (e.g., run-down housing, many soup kitchens in a specific area, excess litter, lack of wheelchair ramps, etc.).
3. Take your students on a community walk. Instruct students to bring a worksheet (**Student Yearbook**, p. 11) and a writing utensil.
4. While on the walk, take time to pause and ask students for observations and allow time for notetaking or photos. The point of the community walk is to look for symptoms of problems that are usually ignored, so take enough time for a thorough expedition.
5. Upon return, lead a class discussion. Ask students:
 - a. What did you notice?
 - b. What was your reaction to seeing it? Surprised? Angry? Encouraged?
 - c. What issue(s) do you think this was a sign of?
 - d. What community resources are in place to help with this issue?
 - e. Is that enough? What more can we do?

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6. To help students better understand what they observed on their walk, ask them to draw a community map. Explain that while most maps detail roads, transit routes, highways and water ways, the community map will instead tell the story of what life is like for people living and working in the community.
7. In their map, students should include:
 - a. Community assets—the places that add value to the community, such as libraries, government offices, community centres, religious buildings or schools, as well as public gardens, playgrounds or even a wall mural that brightens up the community.
 - b. Individual assets—skills and gifts held by community members (including the students themselves), such as public speaking, musical talents, drawing skills or event organization.
 - c. Issue points—locations where you saw evidence of issues in your community.
8. Once students have completed their community maps, have them present their work to the class. After all students have presented their maps, highlight the similarities and differences of the maps that show the many obvious and hidden parts of a community. Post the maps in the classroom or in a prominent hallway in the school to share with the school community, but keep them accessible for future reference.
9. Hold a class brainstorm session to compile a list of issues that affect the local community, both visible and invisible, that were depicted in the various community maps, in addition to examples from local media and other sources. Write the suggestions on the front board. Spend time creating a comprehensive list.
10. Tell students they will now select topics from this list for their local actions.
11. Students should think about the local issue they feel most passionate about. The class may decide to work together on a single issue and concentrate their efforts toward creating a larger impact, or if there is more than one topic students want to take action on, they may form smaller groups. It is important that students are passionate about the issue so they feel invested in the outcomes.
12. Now that students have selected their local issue, refer back to the community maps. Ask students to analyze their maps to find the community assets that match the issue they selected. For example, if the issue was local hunger, students should identify the local food banks or soup kitchens and the people that may already be making a difference.
13. Once students have identified an issue and the community assets related to the issue, have them form an action plan. For example, if the class is interested in improving the environment, organize a litter clean-up day in a local park.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ALREADY?

[illegible]