

City Geography

Teaching Ideas Developed Through the Citi-Educators Program

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PEOPLE PLACES CHOICES CHANGES CONNECTIONS

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Testing Students' Knowledge and Skills

What geographic knowledge and map skills do your students have? To find out, give a pre-test based on the five themes of geography and the topics you plan to develop. The five themes are stated here as part of the directions for a test, which should be read aloud to students.

The test is very easy to organize. To start, give each student a blank sheet of paper. Depending on which theme(s) you plan to develop, ask the students to use words or pictures for the parts of the test that fit your project.

Part 1/Theme: Place

Draw a map of Chicago.

Use a map key to show things people have built and things that are part of nature.

Part 2/Theme: Location

Describe exactly where one place in Chicago is.

Then describe it in terms of another place.

Part 3/Theme: Relationships within places

Tell how people have changed Chicago's geography.

Part 4/Theme: Movement

Tell seven ways people travel in Chicago.

Part 5/Theme: Regions

Tell what makes your neighborhood special.

Name four regions that your neighborhood is part of.

Teachers of grades K-2 should give a modified test. For example, if you are going to teach about places in the neighborhood, ask students to draw pictures and/or write names of as many places as they can.

The post-test is just like the pre-test. After you complete City Geography, ask the same questions. Then let students contrast their answers to discover what they have learned.

PROJECT IDEA BANK OF ACTIVITIES

This list is a collection of starting points for teaching geography with Chicago connections. These ideas are adaptable to any grade level. **The activities can be adapted to focus on: the neighborhood, Chicago, U.S. cities, the state, the country, different countries, world cities.** The activities can be combined in many different projects. For example, a Chicago Job Guide could include newspaper ads, a map with a key showing where many of those jobs are, and interviews of people who work in those places.

Chicago Work Places (Theme: a place has characteristics)

- Make map of places people work in the school community with a key listing the people and jobs.
- Make a graph of jobs in Chicago (based on ads in newspaper).
- Chicago businesses: graphs of numbers of different kinds of businesses based on listings in yellow pages
- Write about the people who work in the community, where they work, what they do there.

Note: This project is adaptable to ANY category, such as Chicago Learning Places, Chicago Living Places.

Chicago Place Locations Theme: a place has a location--a place has locations

- Organize a game based on "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego"--Where in Chicago is _____ (choose a name of interest to your students). To create the game, students will have to assemble facts. Then they will need to create clues based on those facts.
- Use/make special purpose maps: places people learn, places people live (with clues to challenge students to identify places by function and by exact and relative location)
- Use a map to plan for the location of new City Center, a new Community Recreation Center, or a new business. Then explain your choice of location.
- Give each student a sheet of paper. Display a map of Chicago. Have each student use the piece of paper to show a specific area of that map in greater detail. Then have them combine their parts in relative location to each other--in one big map.

Chicago Regions (regions)

- Define your neighborhood--survey people to identify boundaries, what these people identify as the things people share in this community.
- Add to a Chicago map key using picture symbols, patterns, colors to show places and areas of importance in the city. (What is important--you decide.) Number the places and use letters to identify the areas. Then write out a key telling why each place is important.
- Use Chicago newspapers to describe places in Chicago. Students will identify and collect adjectives about a specific place from news reports. Help students collect articles about different areas of the city, such as downtown.
- Use Chicago newspapers to begin a study of multi-cultural Chicago.

Chicago Transportation (movement)

- Use a map to trace routes to school, routes to stores, contrasting distances between places
- Trace a Transport Route--Choose one bus route or el route and explain why the CTA route travels that path.
- Plan a New Bus Route, where should it go and why? Use maps to show the location. Write a paragraph telling why it should go in the location you choose. Write one sentence for each stop to explain why the bus should stop at that location.
- The story of a day in the life of a dollar (who spends it, who next spends it, where and why). The story must include how people move the dollar from one place to another, and it can be accompanied by a map showing the travels of the dollar.
- Transportation Time-Line: students use the transportation time line to make an illustrated history of transportation in Chicago, including a future section they create.
- Train Table: Use information from Amtrak to make "contextual math" problems about time and distance based on train routes between Chicago and other cities. (Adaptable to airline schedules, which can be used for comparison/contrast.)
- Chicago Air Connections: students use airline maps to figure distance, direction to different cities in U.S. and world. Each student chooses one trip, reports on distance and direction, and then researches the destination.

Changing Chicago

(relationships within places)

- Charting Change: Have students make "then/now" charts of changes in their community/city.
 - My community's geographic history: changes that students report, using information from interviews.
 - People change Chicago's environment: students choose one change in Chicago's environmental history and report on effects this change would have had. (Students may use expository writing and/or diagrams to report.)
 - Chicago's future geography: students plan the city for the future. Each student or pair of students takes one change to make, chooses the place to make it, explains that choice of location and predicts its effect on the city.

ISAT CHALLENGE

Using Test-Making Activities to Prepare Students for Test-Taking

Many of the ideas in the idea bank involve expository writing, which is emphasized in the ISAT. Students also can develop narrative or persuasive writing skills in similar activities. For example, as they tell the story of a day in the life of a Chicago dollar, they will narrate a story, and if they write an argument for choosing one location for a change, they will develop persuasive writing skills.

Students need to read critically for information and ideas to succeed at the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the ISAT. To help them succeed at **test-taking**, involve them in **test-making**.

Test-Making Ideas

- > Ask each student who writes a paragraph or essay to write five multiple-choice questions about that material. Then have students exchange papers so that other students will learn from their writing and their questions.
- > Have each student contribute to a class geography quiz.
- > Set up map quizzes that students create based on the format of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in which there is a map with a key and several multiple choice questions based on that one map.
- > Have students make up "contextual" math problems based on using a map scale. For example, have them use a transit map and ask questions about stops along the route based on units of distance traveled on an exemplary trip.
- > Set up a School-Wide Geography Challenge. Each week, contribute questions (and answers) to a Chicago geography quiz in one of four categories:
 - current events in Chicago
 - current events in the United States that affect Chicago
 - current events in the world that affect Chicago
 - Chicago geography facts

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

1. Make a list of key words that you will focus on each week.

2. Assess student learning on a continuing basis.

First, give a pre-test for the whole unit. (See the assessment ideas on page 2.) Then, give a pre-test each week. Ask them to define the key words you will be focusing on--they can define them in words or pictures.

Organize an assessment each Friday. Have students check each other's work so that they clarify the ideas for each other. You can use many different approaches for these assessments.

3. Organize Projects--See the project list above. You also can use the following projects throughout the geography quarter.

WRITING TO CLARIFY IDEAS

You can use the Key Words in the following ways:

- >a paragraph teams of students/pairs of students write
- >a "big book" students write for younger children
- >a word box in which students set up a card file of these words (We recommend that you put the words on different color index cards to help the students see the groupings by topic. We also recommend that you set up teams to do this work so that you have students responsible for different topics.)
- >a bulletin board in the classroom
- >a bulletin board in the hall
- > ?? Your own ideas for building on this work.

STRENGTHENING MATH SKILLS

Collect numerical information about the community and city.

Have students use those numbers in their calculations.

For example, have students identify and graph the kinds of stores in the community. Also use the community itself as a basis for geometry. A map is a geometric representation of the community, and your students can make maps and models that develop geography concepts as well as map skills.

4. Set up a Chicago Geography Activity Bank in the classroom. Bring in materials such as newspapers, maps, other resources that will help the students visualize Chicago and also see that there are many dimensions to the city. The Yellow Pages, the Chicago tourism pictures, and many other resources are available.

5. Make sure that there are meaningful outcomes for the project--for the students and for the school. For example, arrange for students to make a community fact book.

Building a Geography Project: Teacher's Choices

1. What areas of the curriculum will you build into the project?

- expository writing
 - vocabulary phrases/sentences paragraphs reports
 - history
 - economics
 - multi-cultural studies
 - math
 - map skills
 - knowledge of geography:
 - neighborhood Chicago
 - U.S. world
 - Illinois

2. What kinds of projects will you organize?

- book display game place guide

3. Here is a list of the resources you could collect to make city geography connections for your classroom.

- phone directory
 - newspapers
 - 3-ring binder
 - Chicago map
 - post-it pad
 - time-lines of changes in Chicago's geography
 - Iowa/IGAP Challenge Project Sheet
 - directories of sources of Chicago information

What else? The connections are up to you.

For example, if you teach reading, you can ask students to describe or draw maps to show the place where a story occurs.