

## LOCAL ACTIVITY

# Community Mapping




This activity is a hands-on way to get students thinking about the issues that affect their communities.

## Purpose

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

## 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 neighborhood.
- ▶ 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 neighborhood.
- ▶ 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.

Instructional Methods	Materials	Estimated Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kinesthetic</li><li>• Class discussion</li><li>• Brainstorming</li><li>• Mapping and action planning</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Craft supplies for map-making</li><li>• Notebooks</li><li>• Worksheet</li><li>• Writing utensils</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 90 minutes</li></ul> 

1. Ask students if there are any issues, such as homelessness, poverty or pollution, in their community that they are aware of. How do they know about these issues? 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 that 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 their worksheet (see next page) and a writing tool.
4. While on the walk, take time to pause and ask students for observations. Also allow time for taking notes and photos. The point of the community walk is to look for symptoms or problems that are usually ignored or overlooked, so take enough time for a thorough expedition.
5. Upon return, lead a class discussion. Ask students:
  - What did you notice?
  - What was your reaction to seeing it? Surprised? Upset? Motivated?
  - What issue(s) do you think this was a sign of?
  - What community resources are in place to help with this issue?
6. Is that enough? What more can we do?
7. 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.
8. In their map, students should include:
  - **Community assets**—the places that add value to the community, such as libraries, government offices, community centers, religious buildings or schools, as well as public gardens, playgrounds or even a wall mural that brightens up the community.
  - **Individual assets**—skills and talents held by community members (including the students themselves), such as public speaking, musical or other artistic talents, drawing skills or event-organizing skills.
  - **Issue points**—locations where you saw evidence of issues in your community.
9. 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 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 also keep them accessible for future reference.
10. Hold a class brainstorming 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.
11. Tell students to select topics from this list for their local actions.
12. Students should think about the local issue that they feel most passionate about. The class may decide to work together on a single issue and concentrate their efforts on 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 that they feel invested in the outcomes.
13. 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 that they selected. For example, if the issue was local hunger, students should identify the local food banks or soup kitchens and the people who may already be making a difference.
14. 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.

# Community Mapping

<p>What did you see that might be a sign of an issue in your community?</p> <p>It can be something that is present, like litter, or something that is missing, like a lack of garbage bins.</p>	<p>What was your reaction to seeing it?</p> <p>Surprised? Angry?</p>	<p>What issues do you think this was a sign of?</p>	<p>What community programs are in place to help with this issue?</p>	<p>Is that enough? What more can we do?</p>