



Geoblock

The Geoblock activity is a quick and dirty city planning exercise that will prepare students for designing their box city. Students lay out a community using small cube blocks for buildings and marked with natural or man-made features. This activity can also be used at the end of the project as an assessment tool.

Grade Level

Grades 2-5
Younger groups should use fewer blocks selected from each building type.

Subjects

Social Studies, Science

Materials

Block set (approximately 60 blocks) and map

Time

Considerations

Activity: 1 hour

Group Size

Have students work in smaller groups of 6-10 per set of materials.

Standards

Social Studies Grade 4

Describe and give examples of ways in which people interact with the physical environment, including use of land, location of communities, methods of construction, and design of shelters.

Identify major changes in the local community that have been caused by human beings, such as a construction project, a new highway, etc; discuss reasons for these changes; and explain their probable effects on the community and the environment.

Related Pages In Box City

Building Restrictions pg 45-46

City Planning Principles pg 77

Geoblock Activity pg 99-100

Building Assignment pg 112

Doing the Activity

1. Ask the students to look at their map. How might the features affect a city plan and define the edges of the community?

2. A city plan is dependent upon unique features, but also follows zoning rules that dictate where buildings can be placed.

Define zone: A zone restricts building types, size, or uses within a specified area of a community.

Explain that planners use colors to represent zones on maps. Ask student to give examples of buildings for each category:

Green=agricultural, parks

Yellow=residential

Red=commercial

Purple=industry

Blue=civic, government

3. Introduce the blocks and indicate that each is labeled with a building type and is colored according to zoning codes.

4. Instruct students to make a city with all of the blocks on the map.

Ask students to consider these questions in their city design process:

- Where will be the most desirable places to live?
- Where will industry go?
- What are some of the jobs people will do in this city?
- What is most important to the citizens?
- Will there be a downtown?

5. Provide 45 minutes for the city planning activity. Afterwards, ask each group to name a representative who will present their city to the other students. The representative should address the questions in #4.

Extensions

Students can reflect on and evaluate their cities using a variety of criteria. One example: Box City Does Your City Work for You? pg 39-40