

UNIT 5 | CROWDING OUR TOWN

METHOD

Students discuss the people and places that make up a community, construct an imaginary town, and then discuss how communities change when population grows.

MATERIALS

Part 1:

- Large sheets of butcher paper (enough for each small group to have one)
- Small boxes of various sizes, covered in white paper (enough for each small group to have at least 8)
Note: Boxes could include tissue boxes, shoe boxes, cereal boxes, etc. Ask each student to bring in 3-5 covered boxes for homework to lessen the prep time.
- Crayons, markers
- Book that examines the features of a community, such as *Busy, Busy Town* by Richard Scarry (optional)

Part 2:

- Additional small boxes of various sizes (enough for each small group to have at least 4)

INTRODUCTION

Most of us live in a community – a place where a group of people lives and shares resources like libraries, parks, and schools. We depend on the places and people in our community so that we all can be healthy and happy. If the population of a community grows, the community can change in positive and negative ways. When more people live in an area, more houses, doctors' offices, and schools need to be built to support them. There might be more trash or crowding, but also positive things, like more people to volunteer at the fire station.

Green space is also an important part of communities. Green space provides a place for people to play and enjoy nature and a habitat for plants and animals to live. It can be difficult to maintain green space when a community grows.

Note: This lesson is written for small groups, but could also be completed as a whole class exercise.



CONCEPT

Communities are made up of many different things that people need and use. The needs of a community change as the population grows.

GRADE LEVEL

Lower elementary

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, Science

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify three things found in a community and explain why they are important.
- Describe how a community might change when the population grows.
- Explain why it is important to have green space in a community.

SKILLS

Imagining, problem solving, brainstorming, describing, spatial reasoning, critical thinking, cooperating, drawing



PART 1: BUILDING COMMUNITIES

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students to brainstorm the different places and people in your town or neighborhood and identify why each is important. List the items on the board. To help students come up with a wide array of ideas, consider one of the following:
 - Share Richard Scarry's book *Busy, Busy Town*.
 - Share photos of places and people from around your town and ask students to identify them. For example, pictures of the grocery store, school, police officer, postal worker or garbage collector.
2. If your students haven't mentioned parks or green spaces, be sure to point out that green space is also a part of communities. Green space includes parks where people play and also open areas where plants and animals live.
3. Divide students into small groups, and explain that in their groups, they will be "building" a community.
4. Give each group at least 8 "buildings" (small boxes covered in plain paper).
5. In their groups, ask students to decide what they'd like to include in their community and to refer to the brainstorming list on the board for ideas. They should choose which building each box will represent and label and decorate each accordingly (adding windows, doors, signs, pictures, etc.).

Note: If students don't have enough boxes for all of the buildings they want in their community, they can use square pieces of paper labeled with words or pictures to represent the additional buildings.
6. Give each group a large piece of butcher paper and two pieces of green construction paper. Explain to students that they will be placing their buildings on the paper to "build" a community and that the green paper represents green space.
7. Allow students time to build their community by placing their buildings and green space on their large paper. Don't attach them, as they may be moved later on. They should also consider how people will get from place to place and add roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes as they wish.
8. After all the communities have been designed, go through the Discussion Questions as a class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What buildings did you include in your community? Why?
2. What kinds of jobs do people have in your community?
3. Are there buildings or jobs you didn't include in your community that might be in other communities?
4. In what ways is the community you designed different from where you live now? How is it similar?
5. What kinds of transportation do people in your community use?

PART 2: GROWING COMMUNITIES

PROCEDURE

1. Explain to students that sometimes, populations of communities grow - more people live, work, and play there. Lead students in the following discussion:
 - What might there need to be more of in a community if more people live there?
 - What might there be less of?
 - What are some possible negative effects of having a growing population in a community?
 - What are some positive effects?
2. Explain to students they will now pretend the population of their imagined community is growing. Give each group at least four additional boxes to represent new buildings that will need to be built to accommodate the additional people. If you have time, students can identify and label/decorate the new boxes.
3. Ask the students to place these new boxes in their community and then go through the Discussion Questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about how a community might change when more people live there. What buildings might your new boxes represent?

Answers will vary but could include: more houses, another school, another grocery store, a bigger hospital, etc.

2. Were you able to keep your green space open? If so, was it difficult? How did you do it?

Answers will vary. Students may have discovered that stacking their boxes – building “up” rather than “out” – allows more room for green space. Other creative solutions could include removing roads or parking lots and putting in a trolley, adding green space to the top of buildings, etc.

3. What are possible consequences of losing green space in your community?

Losing green space in a community would mean there is no place to play in nature, and less habitat for animals and plants.

4. Would you change anything about how you designed your community?

MEASURING LEARNING

Monitor students' participation in small groups and gauge answers during the class discussion to ensure understanding.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Invite someone who has lived in your community for many years to visit your class and discuss the changes they've seen over time. Be sure to have students think of specific questions to ask prior to the visit. Are there any new buildings? New roads or transportation systems? More people? Fewer people?