Chapter 4

Young Geographers:
Investigating the People/Place Connection

What is Geography?

- An integrative discipline that brings together the physical and human dimensions of the world in the study of people, places, and environments
  1. Earth's surface and process that shaped it
  2. Relationships between people and environments
  3. Connections between people and places

Why Study Geography?

- Strong grasp of geography equips people to make better-informed decisions about how to use Earth's resources
- Investigates the ways by which our land has influenced the way people live
- Children learn how to describe places, explain how these places came to be, and appreciate the delicate bond between humans and their physical environment

Why Study Geography?

1. Existential reason: need to understand the nature of our home
2. Ethical reason; knowledge of how to care for the fragile nature of the Earth
3. Intellectual reason: knowledge of interesting people, places, and things
4. Practical reason; people are better equipped to solve issues and problems
5. Illiteracy of students in US

Five Themes of Geography

- Description of Place: Physical and human characteristics
- Regions: How they form and change
- Location: Position on the Earth's surface
- Inter-relationship between humans and environments
- Movement: Humans interacting on the Earth

Six Essential Elements of Geography

1. World in spatial terms
2. Places and regions
3. Physical systems
4. Human systems
5. Environment and society
6. Use of geography

How Should Geography be Taught?

- Goal: students who are knowledgeable and sensitive to make wise judgments about their environment; caring citizens
- Six Phases of Geography Instruction
  1. Observing
  2. Speculating
  3. Investigating
  4. Extending and reinforcing
  5. Evaluating

Observing

- Beginning of geographic inquiry
- Use direct observations
- Primary grades use multiple resources (photos, videos, maps, globes, atlases, charts, information books, periodicals, textbooks, virtual field trips)

Virtual Field Trips

- Benefits
  1. Hands-on learning permits students to interact with real things
  2. Students develop a greater appreciation for the environment
  3. Examples observed in the field can be related to other classroom work
- Process
  1. Take field notes and make sketches
  2. Discuss observations

Speculating

- Observations lay the foundation for more complex understandings
- Look for clues in the pictures and during the field trips
- Develop inferences that will be tested

Investigating

- Gathering information about locations and human characteristics of those places
- In early elementary grades, use literature, videos, resource persons, internet sites, or other suitable resources
- In middle and upper grades, use other investigative activities such as field work or library research

Extending and Reinforcing

- Use individual or small-group writing activities
- Construct models
- Make maps
- Study tables, charts, graphs
- Examine all types of literature
- Use stimulating data-gathering activities

Evaluating

- Making personal judgments about the situation
- Ask children to support personal opinion with sound reasons

Independent Projects

- Key Events of a Project
  1. Opening Event:
     - should stimulate interest
     - could come from primary sources or secondary sources
     - recall previous experiences
     - begin with questions
  2. Investigating and Producing Something
     - conducting an experiment
     - direct observation
     - interviewing someone
  3. Communicating or Sharing the Project

Benefits of the Project Approach

1. Confronts students with geography-related problems
2. Serves to focus research
3. Can involve the whole class, small groups, or individuals
4. Time flexibility: extend over a whole month or as little as a day
5. Children take the initiative

Maps: Geographer's Tools

- A map is a graphic representation of the earth's surface
- Begin by helping children establish a basic idea of what maps are
- For younger children, awareness begins with the understanding that a map is a picture of some place on earth
- For young children, avoid the aerial view concept of maps

Beginning Map Skills Instruction

- First Steps
  1. Locating places
  2. Recognizing and expressing relative location
  3. Interpreting map symbols
  4. Developing a basic idea of relative size and scale
  5. Reading directions
  6. Understanding that the globe is the most accurate representation of the Earth's surface

Three-Dimensional Maps

- Initial formal mapping experiences should be with a location thoroughly familiar to the children
- Begin in second grade by using concrete building material
- This phase of map construction is critical and leads them to understanding of the aerial view of maps

Flat Maps

- Three-dimensional maps can be easily transformed into a flat map
- In early grades consider constructing a model community (ROXABOXEN)
  1. As a way for children to learn about their community
  2. As a way to master beginning map skills

Other Types of Maps

- Story maps: good children's books offer opportunities for early mapping activities
- Mental maps: informally drawn representation of what a person thinks a place on Earth looks like

Refining Map Skills

- Map symbols
- Direction
- Scale
- The globe
- Latitude and longitude