

COMMUNITY MAPPING

This activity is a hands-on way to get students thinking about the social issues that affect their communities. It's a great way to get a feel for the issues that will keep your students engaged for a year of giving back. On page 8 of the Local Workbook there is a corresponding worksheet where students can make notes and write down responses to reflection questions. There is also a printable PDF online at weday.com/weschools/edresources.

PURPOSE:

Students will learn to identify the issues that affect their community by taking a walk around the neighbourhood and then mapping it out. Finally, they will create a plan to take action and give back to their community.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD(S):

Kinesthetic, class discussion, brainstorming, mapping, action planning

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION:

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Assign local issue topics to groups.

MATERIALS:

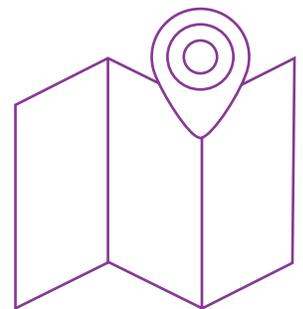
Craft supplies for making a map, notebooks and writing utensils.

ESTIMATED TIME:

60 minutes

STEPS:

1. Ask students if there are any issues such as homelessness, poverty or pollution in their community. How do they know what issues affect their community? 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 they might encounter as symptoms of a larger issue (e.g., run-down housing, many soup kitchens in a specific area, excess litter, etc.).
3. Take your students on a community walk. Instruct students to bring a worksheet (see page 9 of the Local Workbook) and a writing utensil.
4. While on the walk, take time to pause and ask students for observations and allow time for note-taking. The point of the community walk is to look for symptoms of problems that are usually ignored, so take enough time for a thorough expedition.



5. Upon return, lead a class discussion. Ask students:
 - a. What was your reaction to seeing the issue? Surprised? Angry? Confused?
 - b. What issue(s) do you think this was a sign of?
 - c. What community programs are in place to help with this issue?
 - d. What more can we do?

6. 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 waterways, the community map will instead tell the story of what life is like for people living and working in the community.

7. In their map, students should include:
 - a. Community assets—the places that add value to the community, such as libraries, government offices, community centres, religious buildings or schools, as well as public gardens, playgrounds or even a wall mural that brightens up the community.
 - b. Individual assets—skills and gifts held by community members (including the students themselves) such as public speaking, musical talents, drawing skills or event organization.

8. Once students have completed their community maps, have them present them to the class. After all students have presented their maps, highlight the similarities and differences of the maps 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 keep them accessible for future reference.

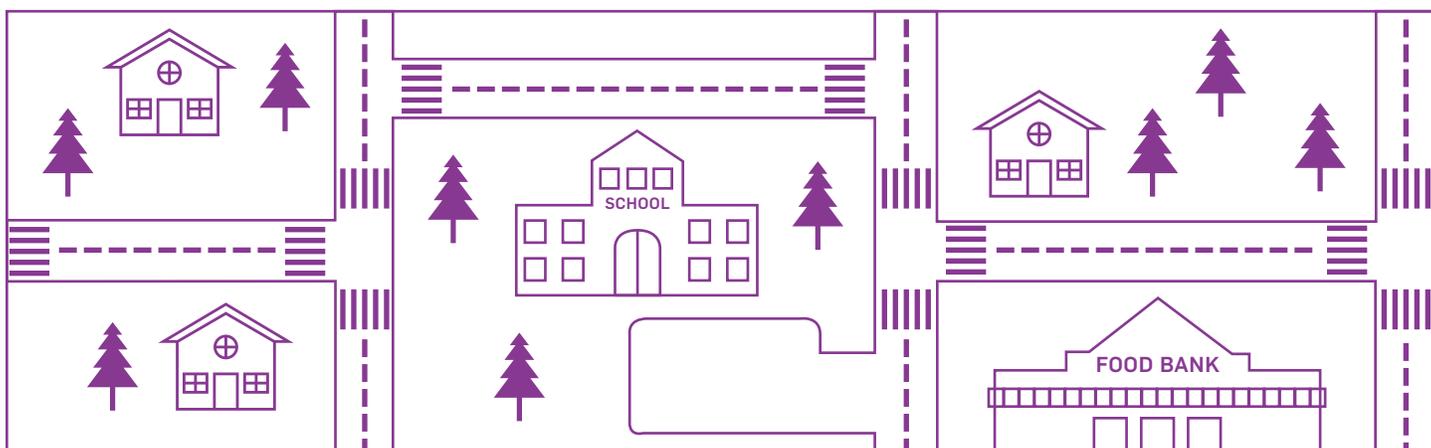
9. Hold a class brainstorm session to compile a list of issues that affect the local community, both visible and invisible, that were depicted in the various community maps, in addition to examples from local media and other sources. Write the suggestions on the front board. Spend time creating a comprehensive list.

10. Tell students they will now select topics from this list for their local actions.

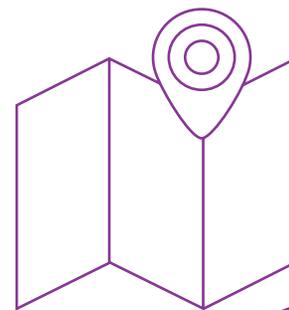
11. Students may vote on the local issue they feel most passionate about. Select one topic that will allow the class to work together and concentrate their efforts towards creating a larger impact. If there is more than one topic students want to choose, allow them to form groups. It is important that students are passionate about the issue so they feel invested in the outcomes.

12. 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 they selected. For example, if the issue was local hunger, students should identify the local food banks or soup kitchens and the people that may already be making a difference.

13. 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.



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Okay, time to lace up your boots and go exploring. We've all walked around our own neighbourhoods before, but we usually forget to take a close look and think about what our surroundings are telling us about the issues facing members of our community.

Your teacher has an activity lesson plan on page 26 of the Educator's Guide for leading a walk through the neighbourhood. Use the first column of the table on the next page to take down notes about the things you notice that might be a sign of a problem in the community. Fill in the remaining columns as you reflect throughout the walk and return to the classroom for discussion.

