

Your School Neighborhood: Past, Present and Future

Anjula Jalan of the Logan School for Creative Learning in Denver, CO

Overview:

The purpose of this activity is to have students learn about how their school neighborhood has changed over time and to preserve their findings in a multi-media or other permanent format.

Standards:

- History Standard 1: Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.
- Geography Standard 2: Students know the physical and human characteristics of places, and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change.
- Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
- Reading and Writing Standard 5: Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.

Objectives:

After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe how the neighborhood has changed over time.
- Identify buildings and other landmarks that still exist in historical photographs.
- Identify sites that have historic importance or that are worth preserving.
- Photograph and draw pictures of these sites.
- Research the history of these sites.
- Create maps of the area.
- Conduct interviews of local residents, local business people, and historians.

- Preserve photographs of important buildings and other landmarks in the neighborhood.
- Communicate in written and oral form how the preservation of historical photographs and evidence contributes to our understanding of the communities in which we live.

Inquiry Questions:

- How has your school neighborhood changed over time?
- How can you use photographs to tell you about the past and what do they tell you about the past?
- How do you decide whether a building or place is important historically?
- Why are these sites important historically?
- Why were certain buildings or places preserved and some destroyed?
- How can you help preserve historic buildings or places?

Procedure:

This project will be done over several days for about two weeks.

1. Have students go through the Virtual Fieldtrips CD-ROM on *Mining and Farming and Ranching* to look at how towns and neighborhoods have been preserved and to give an idea about how to preserve information about their own school neighborhood and history.
2. Look through old photographs of the area and have the students "read" them. Discuss what the neighborhood looked like then versus what it looks like now.
3. Take a neighborhood walk to identify buildings and other places in the area from the photographs. Compare buildings in the pictures to the actual buildings. What is different? What's the same?

Take photographs of the area with a digital camera preferably, and do some sketches of the buildings and the landscape as well.

4. Find a historian or a local resident to come in and talk to the whole class about the area, or a former school librarian who may have some interesting knowledge to pass along to the student.

5. Divide up the neighborhood in 4 parts. In small groups of 4-5 students, have the students walk around the neighborhood and make a map with a key of their area. Include buildings, parks, monuments, roads, and other important features on the maps. Take photographs and draw pictures of the different features. Then have each group choose one building in their area that they think would be worth preserving, specifically, that they think would be important to be around 50 years from now. Take photographs of that building from different angles.
6. Come back as a class to discuss what each group found. Have them share their maps and the building they chose to preserve. Brainstorm ways to learn more about the buildings. Include in the discussion what has happened to the area, what is happening to the area, and what they think the area would look like in the future. Have a student record the information to be displayed as part of the final product.
7. In their groups, have students research the history of their building- some questions they are trying to answer are: What year was the building constructed? What was it used for? What is the style of the architecture? What materials were used to build it? Have there been changes to buildings over the years? Who lived in the building? Try to answer some of the inquiry questions as well.

The students can find information by going to the library, visiting an historical society, interviewing people from the area, visiting a development authority, and taking detailed notes and observations on the building itself.

8. The students will now put all of the research together. The final product will be a virtual tour of the neighborhood, or a display board if appropriate technology is not available. The tour will include a brief history of the area, the maps, photographs of the different buildings and places there now, older photographs of the area, written descriptions of the buildings and places, and a spotlight section that highlights the four buildings to be preserved and a written argument in support of preserving the four buildings. Have the students share this information with other classes and people in the school.