

What Makes a Community?

Adapted from “Create a Community” in *Economics for the Elementary Classroom* by E. Coulson and S. McCorkle. SPEC Publishers, Inc., 2005.

Standards and Benchmarks (see page 11)

Lesson Description

In this lesson, students create a community by drawing pictures of houses, apartment buildings, condominiums, and businesses. They place their pictures on the floor and take a walk in their community. They discover that there are many important features missing from this community. As they draw and add additional features to their community, they learn that some are paid for by government and that taxes pay for government-provided goods and services.

Grade Level

2 to 5

Concepts

Government goods and services

Taxes

Objectives

Students will be able to

- define a community as an area where people live, work, and buy and sell goods and services;
- identify goods and services provided by government;
- define taxes; and
- explain that taxes pay for goods and services provided by government.

Compelling Question

What makes a community?

Time Required

90 to 120 minutes

Materials

- One copy of Handout 1 cut apart to provide a card for each student (If there are more than 26 students, use duplicate cards or pair students.)
 - One copy of Handout 2 for each student
 - Two sheets of drawing paper for each student
 - Crayons for each student
 - Crepe paper streamers to be used as streets
 - Crepe paper streamers cut in half—so they are 1½" wide—to be used as sidewalks
 - Painter's or masking tape for each small group of students
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Preparation

For Day 1: Draw individual pictures (all landscape oriented) of Stonecrest apartments and the city art museum from Community Card #1 and Mary's Movie Theater and the city recycling center from Community Card #2.

For Day 2: Clear wall space in the classroom or hallway for students to display the community they create.

Procedure

Day 1

1. Ask the students what community they live in. (*Answers will vary.*) Point out that a community is a place where people live, work, and buy and sell goods and services. Discuss the following:
 - Who are some people who work in your community? (*Answers will vary, but hopefully students will mention firefighters, teachers, store owners, cab drivers, police officers, and so on.*)
 - Who are some people who live in your community? (*Answers will vary, but hopefully students will mention themselves and their families.*)
 2. Explain that students will create their own community. Each of them will receive a Community Card that describes businesses or places where community members live. The students will draw pictures of these.
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3. From *Handout 1: Community Cards*, read cards #1 and #2 to the class, tell what is underlined, and show the corresponding pictures you drew of the underlined buildings.

Community Card #1

Mrs. Suiter and her daughter, Bella, live in the Stonecrest apartment building. Bella likes to go to the city art museum to look at art and artifacts.

Community Card #2

Mary's Movie Theater is a business that shows movies to people. It sells drinks in aluminum cans. Mary takes the empty aluminum cans to the city recycling center every Monday.

4. Distribute one card from Handout 1, a sheet of drawing paper, and crayons to each student. Instruct students to draw a picture of what is underlined on their cards. Tell them to draw the picture with the paper in landscape (hotdog) rather than portrait (hamburger) orientation. After the drawings are complete, discuss and do the following:
 - Where do people live in the community? (*Houses, apartment buildings, and condominiums*)
 - Invite students to show pictures they drew of a house, apartment building, or condominium.
 - Explain that people get a place to live by renting a house or apartment or by buying a house or condominium.
 - What are some of the businesses in the community you live in and what do they sell? (*Banks accept deposits and makes loans, movie theaters show movies and sell snacks, dry cleaning stores clean clothing, department stores sell clothing, book stores sell books, gas stations sell gasoline, and so on.*)
 - Invite students to show pictures they drew of businesses.
 - Who owns these businesses? (*People like Mary or a group of people*)
5. Tell the students that they are going to use the pictures to create a community. Place your pictures of Stonecrest apartments and Mary's Movie Theater on the floor. Create two columns with the sides of the pictures touching (that is, with no space between them).
6. Explain that you are going to take a walk in the community. Act as if you are going to step on the pictures. Students are likely to stop you. If they do not, tell them that it is impossible for you to walk in their community without ruining their pictures. Ask students what important structures for walking and driving in their community are missing. (*Roads and sidewalks*)
7. Have students arrange the homes and businesses to create city blocks. Use crepe paper to create roads and half-pieces of crepe paper to create sidewalks.
8. Reread Community Cards #1 and #2 to the class. Explain that each card gives a clue about another important community feature. These community features are bolded. Tell students that on your cards the bolded community features are the city art museum and recycling center.

9. Instruct students to reread their own Community Card to find the bolded community feature. Allow time for students to share examples from the cards.
10. Distribute another sheet of drawing paper to each student and instruct them to draw a picture of the bolded feature. Again, students should draw with the paper in landscape and not portrait orientation.
11. Upon completion, have students show their pictures to the class and tell what they have drawn. Explain that these features provide people with important goods and services.
12. Add these drawings to the floor display. Also add your drawings of the city art museum and recycling center. Add streets as needed.
13. Explain that many of the community features that they added today such as roads, sidewalks, the library, the fire station, and so on are provided by government.
14. Collect pictures and crepe paper and keep for Day 2.

Day 2

15. Remind students that they have created a community by drawing businesses and homes and also added special features to their community such as roads and bridges. Discuss the following:
 - What other special features did you add to your community? (*A fire station, recycling center, art museum, city dump, weather service, and so on*)
 - Who provides many of these special features? (*Government*)
16. Explain that government provides these **government goods and services** because they are important for many people to have and use. Businesses aren't likely to provide these goods and services, so government provides them. To provide government goods and services for the community, governments collect taxes from individuals and businesses in the community. **Taxes** are required payments to government.
17. Ask students what kinds of taxes they have heard about. (*Most will have heard of sales tax. Some may have heard of income tax.*)
18. Explain that these taxes are used to provide schools, roads, sidewalks, fire protection, and many other government goods and services.
19. Tell students that they are now going to recreate their community on a wall in the classroom (or hallway).

20. Divide the class into small groups of three to four students and give each group painter's tape or masking tape. Distribute drawings and allow students to begin placing the community on the wall. Remind them to leave space for the crepe paper roads and sidewalks. Allow time for students to work and then discuss the following:
- Where is the trash dump? (*Answers will vary.*)
 - Is it good to have the trash dump near homes? Why? (*No, because trash dumps smell bad and attract rats and other animals; it is unhealthy for people to live near trash dumps.*)
 - Where is the aquatics center? (*Answers will vary.*)
 - Would you want an aquatics center near your home? Why? (*No, because the aquatics center will be noisy and cause a lot of traffic. It isn't safe to have it near people's homes.*)
 - Where is the recycling center? (*Answers will vary.*)
 - Why might we want the fire station near homes and businesses? (*So firefighters can get to fires quickly*)
 - Why might we want the library and park near homes? (*So people can easily use them*)
21. Continue the discussion with students so that they recognize that people organize communities to keep people safe, to maintain health, and to allow people easy access to government goods and services. Allow time for students to reorganize their community as needed.
22. Have the class name their community, create a sign with the name on it, and post it on the wall.

Closure

23. Review the key concepts in the lesson by discussing the following:
- What is a community? (*A community is a place where people live, work, and buy and sell goods and services.*)
 - Where do people live in a community? (*Houses, apartments, and condominiums*)
 - What kinds of businesses are in communities? (*Restaurants, movie theaters, car washes, hospitals, aquatic centers, hair salons, nail salons, travel agencies, dry cleaners, banks, law firms, clothing stores, and so on*)
 - Who owns these businesses? (*People or groups of people*)
 - What other features are important in communities? (*Roads, sidewalks, fire stations, sewers, recycling centers, airports, trash dumps, schools, parks, libraries, and so on*)
 - Who often provides these other features? (*Government*)
 - How do governments pay for these features? (*They collect taxes.*)
 - Who pays taxes? (*People and businesses pay taxes.*)

- Why do communities place trash dumps, recycling centers, airports, and other special features away from people’s homes and businesses? (*To keep people healthy; to keep it more quiet in these areas*)
- Why do communities place parks, sidewalks, libraries, and other features near homes and businesses? (*So people can easily use these features*)

Assessment

24. Distribute a copy of *Handout 2: Assessment* to each student. Allow time for students to work, then review answers using the *Handout 2: Assessment—Answer Key*.

Handout 1: Community Cards (page 1 of 2)

<p>#1 Mrs. Suiter and her daughter, Bella, live in the <u>Stonecrest apartment building</u>. Bella likes to go to the city art museum to look at art and artifacts.</p>	<p>#2 <u>Mary's Movie Theater</u> is a business that shows movies to people. It sells drinks in aluminum cans. Mary takes the empty aluminum cans to the city recycling center every Monday.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. Payne live in a <u>house</u>. Their grandson DeVon rides a school bus.</p>	<p><u>New Age Dry Cleaning</u> is a business that cleans clothes. The cleaning products could catch fire. The owner is glad the fire station is nearby.</p>
<p><u>Best Bank</u> keeps lots of money for families and businesses. They are happy a police station is nearby.</p>	<p>Mr. and Mrs. Chang live in a <u>house</u>. Mr. Chang teaches fifth grade at Clayton School.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. Hassam and their two daughters live in a <u>house</u>. Their dog, Fido, ran away yesterday. They found Fido at the city dog shelter.</p>	<p><u>Smith & Eldridge Law Firm</u> is a business that helps people. Sometimes the firm takes its problems to a judge at the city court building.</p>
<p><u>Happy Home Builders</u> is a business that builds houses. They must get permission at city hall before they begin to build.</p>	<p>Mr. Brown and his son, Joe, live in a <u>house</u>. Joe goes to Woods Middle School.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. Lopez live in a <u>house</u>. Juan goes to East High School.</p>	<p>Mrs. White lives in a condominium in <u>Walker Condominiums</u>. She has four children. They like to check out books at the city library.</p>
<p><u>Trip Travel Agency</u> plans trips for people. Many travelers fly out of the city airport.</p>	<p><u>Good Car Wash</u> is a business that washes cars. Its dirty water goes into the city sewers.</p>

Handout 1: Community Cards (page 2 of 2)

<p>Mr. and Mrs. Flowers live in a <u>house</u>. Mr. and Mrs. Flowers both ride city busses to work each day.</p>	<p>Mrs. Jackson and her son, Michael, live in the <u>Good Life apartment building</u>. They go to the city park to fly kites.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. Jordan live in the <u>Home Sweet Home apartment building</u>. They take their grandsons to the community center for day camp.</p>	<p>Mrs. Tucker and her three children live in the <u>Castel apartment building</u>. They can't have pets. They often visit the city zoo.</p>
<p><u>Nails & Toes</u> is a business that provides manicures and pedicures. The mail carrier brings them packages of nail supplies each day.</p>	<p><u>Randy's Restaurant</u> sells food to people. Every month someone from the city health center makes sure everything is clean and safe.</p>
<p><u>Hair Designs</u> is a business where people get their hair styled, cut, washed, and braided. Empty containers and hair swept from the floor goes into the city trash dump.</p>	<p><u>St. Andrew's Hospital</u> is a business that helps sick people get well. Some people go to the hospital in a city ambulance.</p>
<p><u>Larry's Lawn Service</u> is a business that takes care of yards. Larry calls the U.S. Weather Service each morning to see if it will be raining that day.</p>	<p>Mr. and Mrs. Caceres live in a <u>high-rise condominium building</u>. Each day they ride the subway to and from work.</p>
<p><u>Freddy's Fast Foods</u> is a business that sells food. People pay sales tax on the food. Freddy must turn the sales tax into the city revenue office.</p>	<p>Mr. and Mrs. Johnson live in a <u>house</u>. Their three children take swimming lessons at the city aquatics center.</p>

Handout 2: Assessment—Answer Key

Directions: Answer the questions below.

1. What is a community?

A community is a place where people live, work, and buy and sell goods and services.

2. Put a checkmark in front of the goods and services below that government would provide in a community.

Streets and roads

Park

Restaurant

Library

Sewers

Fire station

Bank

Grocery store

Public school

Dry cleaning store

Hair salon

City trash dump

3. How does government pay for the goods and services it provides?

Government collects taxes from its citizens.

4. Who can use the goods and services government provides?

Everyone in the community is able to use the goods and services that government provides.

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics

Standard 16: Role of Government

- **Grade 4 Benchmarks**

1. Governments provide certain kinds of goods and services in a market economy.
2. Governments pay for the goods and services they use or provide by taxing or borrowing.