

POSTCARDS ACROSS AMERICA

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GRADE LEVEL: 5th grade

PURPOSE: To increase students' knowledge and awareness of the location and physical features of each of the fifty states in America.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS:

#3- How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

#4- Understand the physical and human characteristics of a place.

(Themes: Location and Place)

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Postcards featuring Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University, etc. (enough for every student)
- Stamps
- Resources for Information on Indiana (encyclopedia, trade books, Internet printouts, maps, etc.)
- Glue
- Clear packing tape
- Pins or stickers
- Wall map of the United States

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to understand the relationship of the other 49 states in comparison to Indiana. Students will also be able to locate all fifty states and describe their physical features.

PRE-ACTIVITY WORK BY THE TEACHER:

The teacher will need to sign up for a postcard exchange project list via the Internet (see references). The teacher will also need to locate information on Indiana for the small group research.

PROCEDURES:

1. Divide the class into small groups of four to five students.
2. Give each group information on Indiana. Use different resources for each group to expose students to many different types of resources (in preparation for state report).

3. As a team, have each group come up with 3-5 facts about Indiana.
4. Have each group share their facts about Indiana. Compose a class list of all of the facts.
5. Distribute class lists to students. Then, using these lists, have each student type up a short paragraph about Indiana to include on their postcard. Also, have each child include in their paragraphs a request for a return postcard with information about the school that the child's postcard was sent to. After printed, have students cut out paragraphs to fit their postcards. Glue to back of postcards. Cover with packing tape to protect during mailing.
6. Distribute lists. Have each child find the state that they will be researching and locate a school from that state to mail their postcard to. Address postcards and mail.
7. As postcards start coming in, plot each state on the map using a pin or sticker. Use the cards to review map skills and begin to identify characteristics of each state in relationship to Indiana. (Examples: Which direction would we travel if we were to visit California? What is the climate like in California? What is the capital of CA? Which ocean borders CA? What states border CA?)
8. Make copies of the paragraphs about Indiana. As postcards come in from other schools on the list, mail a postcard back to them. Continue collecting postcards the entire year. (Your name will also be on the mailing list and you will receive postcards from more schools than just those that you mailed postcards to.)

EXTENSIONS:

1. Give information about the project to parents. Ask them to have relatives from different parts of the U.S. send postcards with descriptions of where they live.
2. Analyze information about the number of postcards received from different regions, and different states. Make inferences about the patterns discovered. (We received lots of postcards from schools in the east, but only a few from the northwest. Why?)
3. As a partnering activity, have students create a US map in which they shade in different regions, locate and draw in the major mountains, rivers, and bordering oceans, and label each state and capital.

ASSESSMENT:

Students will take quizzes over each region of the United States. Students will have to be able to locate and identify each state and be able to spell it correctly. Students will be given bonus points if they are able to identify and correctly spell the capital of each state. A final test will be given over all fifty states.

Students will also be participating in class projects on an individual state.

At the end of the year, students will write paragraphs reflecting on what they have learned about America and which activities influenced them the most throughout the year.

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR POSTCARD EXCHANGE PROJECTS:

<http://www.teachnet.com/> - 100 day Postcard Exchange, Holidays Around the World, Class 2 Class

<http://www.internet-catalyst.org/> -postcard geography