

Community Awareness and Community Mapping

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Community Mapping Introduction

Every school is located in a community, and that community has both a historical record and current resources that can enhance teaching and learning. However, too often the school and the community remain isolated from each other, and neither teachers nor the teacher education programs that prepare teachers situate learning in the community context, thus missing the opportunity to incorporate the community in building the knowledge, skills and values that could enhance learning. The relationship between a community and a school should be a two-way street since both have something to offer each other, but making that a reality requires that teachers know both what is available and how to make use of that knowledge. And most significantly, they must develop the disposition that experiential learning is possible, interesting, and important. Community mapping is a process that promotes increased traffic on the school-community street, engaging teachers, students, and pre-service teachers in more systematic information gathering and use of the community in teaching and learning (Treadway, 2000, p. 2).

Many times we drive through a community to get to work or school and do not notice the many types of buildings and activities which make up the community. Sometimes you walk around your community for years and get so accustomed to seeing things that you miss certain places that might have been there. There are often many signs in the community which help us better understand the nature of the community and the variety of experiences community members have. All too often, we do not pay attention to these aspects of the community.

The community we will visit today is rich in its own history, with a special geography, and the old and the new that make it a place where folks live. By completing this mapping activity today, you will be able to document the assets and issues of living in this community. I expect you to reflect on this information about the community and how you can use this information and interactions with folks in the community to better connect lessons to the lives of students you teach.

“Mapping” the neighborhood with a camera, making rubbings, taking photos, observing the neighborhood, and interacting with the people who work and live in the neighborhood should allow you to “See” the community with new lenses.

You will spend a little more than two hours completing the mapping activity this morning. You will divide into groups (no more than 8 people in a group) to map a 3-6 block area of the city, collecting information and talking to people. We will return here for lunch. After lunch you will create a collage and map of your journey and experiences and present (with your team) to larger group.

During the Community Mapping you will learn more about

- Organizations that exist in the community
- Geography and architecture of the community
- Different kinds of employment and businesses in the community

To Complete the Mapping Experience you will

- Explore a section of the community
- Gather artifacts and photos
- Present a map and collage of the community.

Jobs for Community Mapping

1. **Scout:** Read the directions on a map and lead the group around the area. Needs a map.
2. **Mapper.** Draws a map as the group moves around in the community highlighting places or people en route. Needs grid paper, pencil and clip board.
3. **Note-taker.** Records where you go and what you see. Records the photographs taken and places and people of interest. Charts the journey of the group.
4. **Photographer.** Take 10 photos of the building, historical places and others things of interest (if they will allow you). Limit yourself to 10 photos. Needs digital camera or polaroid camera.
5. **Tabulator.** Takes the survey data and tabulates housing, business, churches, recreation agencies, etc. Should be a person who is detailed.
6. **Collector.** Collects objects, brochures, community newspapers, biological evidence (leaves, flora etc.). Tells note-taker what is collected and why. Needs a collection bag.
7. **Rubber.** Where appropriate do stone rubbings of historical markers. Need paper and crayons.

Community Mapping of Designated Community Area

Mark a slash mark for each item you observe:

Type of Building	Mark A Slash (/) for every example
Apartment Building	
Church	
Businesses	
Non Profit Organization or Agency	
Duplex Housing	
Single Family Dwellings	
Schools	
Other	

Describe the types of housing you see in the neighborhood. What kind is most common?

List any issues that you observe (trash, graffiti, potholes, parks etc.) and location

List any evidence of construction/reconstruction/renovation/repair

Community Mapping Photographing the Neighborhood

Take a maximum of ten photos to best represent the characteristics of the neighborhood.

Photograph	Subject/Content	Location
1.		
2		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Neighborhood Notes

Name of the Neighborhood Area _____

Your responsibility is to take notes on what the groups observes, who the groups encounters and talks to or gets information from or what questions were asked. These notes or quotes can then be later be transferred to the collage that will be created about the neighborhood. Indicate who, where and what in the notes.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Community Mapping Questions

Questions when mapping a predominantly business area.

1. What do you notice about the retail center?
2. What can you find out about the history of this location?
3. Whom do you notice is hanging about at the retail center?
4. What do you notice about the mix of tenants in this area (in different parts of the area).
5. What services are provided in this neighborhood? (check out agencies “X” and “Y”).
6. Are there any historic plaques in the area? Should there be?

Questions when mapping a predominantly residential area

- What services are available for youth and families in this area?
- What goods and services are *not* available in “the neighborhood?” Where do people go to buy these?
- Note the use of the park space? Consider use of open space in this district (safety issues for children & youth).
- What kinds of retail options are available?
- What is most common way for people from this neighborhood to “make it” economically?
- What is the racial mix of the 5 block area?
- Has this changed over time, if at all? In what ways?
- What is the economic mix of the 5 block area?
- Look for housing that has been improved and that which has not.
- What community groups are in the neighborhood

Questions focused on safe spaces for children to play and get to school

1. 1.What would you consider as safe ways to get these students to school?
2. What do you notice about the differences in housing stock?
3. What do you notice about the traffic patterns?
4. What kind of open spaces are there for physical recreation? Where do kids hang out?
5. What are the positive places kids go to? (Community centers? Recreation centers?)

Steps in Mapping of your own School Area¹

Step 1. Instructor's Scouting Mission and Maps for Students.

The instructor (teacher) does a scouting mission at the local, regional or central library and then in the community. The instructor needs to make contact with one or more librarians and plan for what will happen on the visit with students; go through the resources (maps, vertical files, community newspapers, etc) collecting historical and current information. From that, the instructor may glean one or two articles that may be read by students prior to going to the library and develops a plan for visiting the library with the students or sending them to do the work independently. Going as a group is preferable because the interaction of students in sharing resources and bringing up ideas for use with students is more prolific if interdependent group work occurs.

The instructor then needs to choose a map that can be copied, decide on 3-4 areas/routes for mapping, copy maps (usually enlarging), and lay out "trail" with highlighter.

Typically, the group should "map" at least three different areas of a community. At the conclusion (Step 5) each group will make a presentation to the full group, highlighting what they found out about the community. In some cases, the mapping can be accomplished through a walking tour; in others, a car is more useful.

Step 2: Preparing Survey Instruments, Materials, and Directions

The end result is a presentation to the full group or class from each group since each group has "mapped" a different area in the community. The presentation can take the form of a map on poster board with photos, artifacts, etc. However, a more sophisticated presentation using presentation software, developing a skit, or showing a video for part of the presentation is also possible. The best case scenario is that there will be enough students to be responsible for several "jobs". The Job Cards and materials, all collected in a shopping bag, are distributed by the scout (or teacher). In the case of pre-service teachers, they can divide up the jobs, taking 2-3 different ones. Everyone is responsible for observing and talking to people, asking questions and deciding where to stop and what is important.

Step 3: Preparing Students for Community Mapping: Teacher Education Students

or Elementary/Secondary Students

Clearly state the goals and objectives of the community (refer to Introduction). The goal of the activity is to develop a broader knowledge base about the assets and issues of the school community so that the knowledge and experiences in the community will become an intrinsic part of the teaching and learning experience. It is expected that the pre-service teacher will replicate this experience in their first teaching assignment in order to (1) find out about the community they are teaching in; (2) use similar activities in their teaching careers and (3) use what they find out about communities in a variety of

¹ Adapted from Treadway's (2000) guidelines on Community Mapping.

ways. Because the activity is experiential and community-based, it draws upon a wide variety of skills and develops new ones: working in groups, interviewing/asking questions, collecting information and making sense out of the information for a presentation, making choices about what to photograph, record, etc.

Step 4: Supervising Community Mapping

Pre-service teachers can usually manage the actual mapping activity on their own, once they have been to the library and been given the directions and materials. The actual walking tour/collecting/ etc takes about 2-3 hours. Certainly, if the instructor has never done this with a group of students previously, the instructor should go through the full process with students, taking on an observer-participant role but not be the guide/scout. If the students seem reticent and need modeling about going into organizations, inquiring, or knowing what to collect, the instructor can model, offer suggestions, etc., taking note of these for use in the reflection/debriefing process.

In the case of a teacher taking elementary or secondary students, s/he takes a more active role as needed: (1) handing out Job cards or strips (Document 3; modeling how to go into agencies or businesses, and encouraging students to develop a short introduction (example: “We are doing a project in school in which we are walking around our community trying to find out as much as we can about businesses and organizations so that we know the resources of our own community better. May we visit with you for a few minutes and get some information?).

Step 5: Student Presentations

The presentations should be both visual and oral and about 10 minutes in length. If there are models from prior community mapping experiences that students can use as a model (exemplar), that is helpful. Students should be encouraged to digest the information and synthesize the data, making 2-3 clear points with the presentations. They should include clear ways that this mapping activity can be translated to classroom use – using the photographs, the rubbing, the collected items, the notes as captions or explanations, the photo notes as captions, etc.

Students should:

- Analyze data from various surveys, maps, photos collections and talk together about what the information means
- Make choices about the presentation: (1) format: poster board, presentation software, video and (2) major themes/points. Then make choices about what to include – photos, artifacts, etc. Typically the poster reflects a large map of the community with key photos, artifacts, information. A key can be made.
- Complete the construction of the presentation, making certain everyone has a task: (1) construct the poster ; (2) write a brief report that will be presented to the full group; (3) organize all materials in a folder or packet.

Step 6: Reflection/Debriefing

Students should reflect on the experience, both as a process and how that worked and the application for teaching. The reflection can be a conversation or it can be written. Some possible questions for discussion are:

1. What did you or your group find:
 - interesting about the process?
 - helpful about the process?
 - difficult about the process?
 - enjoyable about the process?
2. Which of the activities engaged you the most? Why?
3. How does this process and information relate to “anchoring learning in students’ diverse life contexts?”
4. How could community mapping be useful in your classes?
5. What did you learn about the community history, geography, culture, etc that you did not know before?
6. What issues related to the community emerged from your mapping? What might be some next steps regarding the issues?
7. How would you apply this experience to a) your content area? , b) working with students?
8. What ways, if any, were your perceptions changed or enhanced by this experience?

References

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