

Place-based Learning Initiative Write-Up

Teachers: Jason Bellerose

Subject(s): Social Studies

Community Collaborators: Jeff Hewett

Essential Question: How to best inform the citizens and visitors of Skowhegan what recreational opportunities Skowhegan has to offer. Mr. Hewett the Director of Economic & Community Development has looked into creating a map of this sort in the past, but has never had the time to undertake the project.

Abstract:

Overview

1. Describe the NEED existing in your community that the initiative addresses.

The town of Skowhegan has some wonderful recreational facilities. Some, like the Recreation Center are well known, others, are not known by many at all. For example, I have lived in Skowhegan for the past few years and have often wanted to go for a bike ride. It was only through this project that I learned there were trails about a quarter mile away. I began to wonder how many others were like me. It was then I contacted Mr. Hewett and expressed my interest in compiling a list of outdoor recreation facilities that Skowhegan has to offer. I would then work with my student to visit these sites, catalog what there is to do, photograph them, and create a map of Skowhegan with these facilities highlighted. The project not only serves as a marketing tool for the town to use currently, but also, could be very important in targeting things to do for those who come to enjoy the completed "Run of River."

2. List your goals and objectives for this place-based endeavor?

The overall goal of the project was to create a high quality map layered with the various recreational facilities the town currently has. It should be noted that a map of this nature currently does not exist for the town. This map would then be published using town funding to create multiple copies for Skowhegan residents and visitors alike. Along the way the information for the map was collected, verified, and produced by the students.

3. Procedure: List the activities/procedures undertaken in the various phases of your learning unit

Phase I was deciding on the scale of the map and what features would be included. A cursory inspection of the area revealed that many attractions exist in Skowhegan and the surrounding communities, not all being recreational in nature, but at least attractive to the passing tourist or visitor. Instead of telling the students what area and activities we were to focus on, they were allowed to participate in the brainstorming process. I was merely a moderator guiding their thinking. As a result, we arrived at a list of locations that were remarkable enough to earn recognition. Mr. Hewett was then invited into the classroom to discuss with the students the selections and share any suggestions he had to offer. The meeting was very successful. The students were able to interact with a town official and perhaps for the first time, see that they had ownership in the project. The estimation of their own input was validated and led to greater interest by all involved.

Phase II was the writing of the paragraphs and all research involved in the process. Due to the late snow cover and inclement weather, field trips to the area sites had to be delayed. However, we were able to use different resources the town had in its library of information. Of these, the Eagle Scout Project was most helpful. Included in this phase was the layout of the map—where the descriptions would go in relation to the map, what icons would be used, and how to handle including the Lake George Park in the project.

Phase III would allow the students to view and photograph the sites. Once photos were attained, the size and location of the images would be decided on in relation to the descriptions on the map. Amount of space is an issue, since there are approximately a dozen locations requiring summaries. Again, the students will take the lead in omissions, cropping, and location of all the data to appear on the brochure.

Phase IV of the project will ready the brochure will for print. A final meeting with Mr. Hewett will be scheduled. He has already secured the money for printing the final product on glossy paper. After printing and review, the maps will be distributed to area businesses, including the Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce and the Municipal Building. There also has been discussion of framing the map and hanging a copy in the new renaissance center.

4. Teachers can empower students by allowing them to “exercise their own powers and responsibilities”(Bloomer). Community Projects seek to encourage and enhance this student empowerment.

Describe how your students were able to direct their own learning throughout the activities in which they were engaged.

The use of class time was not lesson planed, instead, there was initially a great amount of brainstorming and open discussion about the scale of the map, what to include on the map, and how to represent those choices. Aside from the creation of a map that will be made available to the general public, there will be paragraphs written by the students accompanied with photos of the destinations. These descriptions will be a culminating activity for the students, since MSAD #54 has been focusing on literacy across the curriculum. The process of creating our product took place in Skills class, a function of our literacy initiative. The process of writing Sum-It-Up paragraphs has been scaffolded for an entire year; the

community project gave the students real life application for one of our building wide literacy strategies.

5. Who are your community partners or individuals in the community who are assisting students with this initiative?

Jeff Hewett – Director Economic & Community Development Office

21st Century Skills –describe how the following skills are embedded in your Place-based Initiative:

6. **Teaming and Collaboration:** Students worked together during the various phases of the project. For the most part students were able to choose whom they wanted to work with. For Example: for the Sum-It-Up explanations students went to the location and everyone wrote a summary. Those that were “assigned” a location, Debe Trail for instance, collected the write-ups, read them all, and wrote a final write up. This process again was used strategically to reinforce the literacy strategy Sum-It-Up.
7. **Technology Integration-how specifically did your student use technology throughout the phases:**

Students used their laptops everyday to conduct research, collaborate information, and design the final projects. Students also used digital cameras to take pictures of the highlighted recreational facilities. Students also used the DLP projector regularly.

8. **Interactive Communication (including multi-media presentations)**

The students made many of the contacts with Jeff Hewett throughout the project. The students were also asked to present their photos and icon ideas using the DLP projector.

9. **Literacy strategies used by students (in your content)**

The literacy strategies we used were

1. Graphic Organizers
2. Think-Pair-Shares
3. Think Aloud
4. The culminating activity was a Sum-It-Up

Assessment

10. How is this initiative benefiting the community:?

The community will have access to a professional looking map that represents the many recreational facilities that Skowhegan currently has to offer. This map highlights through student write-ups the outdoor facilities within walking distance from the downtown.

11. Describe the student projects you will be submitting for publishing as a result of this Place-based initiative.

Currently, the students are in the process of submitting to Mr. Hewett our finalized map template. Through this process the students are engaging in discussions about the final layout of the information. It should be noted that the information that is being presented on the map comes entirely from student work. Mr. Hewett will be given the final layout along with the digital information needed to complete the joint venture. We have chosen to go this route as a team because Mr. Hewett is the only one who has access to the GIS mapping program being used for the final project.

12. How are student projects evaluated? Please include your Rubrics.

Since there were so many steps to this project, students were asked to meet due dates along the way. Many of the due dates involved conducting of research, creation of icons, layout options amongst various other tasks. Throughout the entire project the level of intrinsic motivation displayed by the students was exceptional, and grades became a non-motivating factor. This, to me, is a true measure of success.