

Social Studies Activities

Integrating Physical Activity Into Social Studies

Name of activity	Lesson focus
Travel the State	Places and regions in your home state
Toss, Catch, and Find	Geography, specific locations on the globe
Physical Morse Code	Invention of Morse code
Finding Our Way	Cardinal and intermediate directions
What Is the Shape of the State?	States and capitals
Pass a Law	Government balance of power
Washington Crosses the Delaware	George Washington
Get Along, Little Doggie	Cowboys driving cattle, the Chisholm Trail from Texas to Kansas
Time Travels	Transportation

See CD content for chapter 7 ("Games From Other Countries") and chapter 8 ("Folk Dance") for additional ideas to enhance social studies from a global perspective.

Travel the State

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Places and regions in your home state

Organization

Students standing by desks or in an open area of the room

Equipment

- A travel plan created by the teacher that emphasizes different landmarks and tourist attractions
- A large map of the state, divided into regions

Physical Activity

Using South Carolina for our example, you would read each statement and allow the students to imitate the movement for about 10 to 15 seconds before reading the next one.

- Run up the steps to the capitol building in Columbia.
- Ride the waves on your new surfboard at the beach near Charleston.
- Raise your hands in the air as you soar down a roller coaster in Myrtle Beach.
- Hike to the top of Table Rock in Travelers Rest.
- Catch a fish in Lake Jocassee.
- Swim across Lake Hartwell.
- Paddle your canoe in Lake Murray.
- Ride your bicycle on the back roads from Spartanburg to Charleston.
- Slam dunk a basketball at the Bi-Lo Center in Greenville.
- Kick a field goal at Williams-Bryce Stadium in Columbia.
- Stretch high like a giraffe at the Greenville Zoo.
- Climb to the top of the Peach in Gaffney.
- Drive a racecar at Darlington Raceway.
- Swing your golf club on one of the many golf courses in Hilton Head.
- Walk through the fields of cotton in Orangeburg.
- Run in the race across the Cooper River Bridge in Charleston.
- Tiptoe through the old battlefields in Cowpens.
- Trudge or march through the wetlands in Edisto.

Content Modifications

1. After traveling the state, the students could work in groups and place each movement in the correct region.
2. A large map highlighting each region should be posted in the room. The South Carolina example would include the Blue Ridge Mountains, Piedmont, Coastal Plains, Coastal Zone, and Sand Hills.
3. Print all the locations and activities from the travel experience on index cards. A student from each group draws a card. The group decides on the location by region and places the card in the correct region. If the class agrees with the group decision, the movement is repeated by the entire class.

Toss, Catch, and Find

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Geography, specific locations on the globe

Organization

Students scattered in the classroom or outside, about 10 feet (3 meters) apart

Equipment

One beach ball globe per two students

Physical Activity

Two students underhand toss a beach ball globe back and forth five times. On the fifth toss, ask the student who has the globe a question or give a clue regarding a particular location. The student answers by placing a finger on that location on the globe and then confirms the answer with the partner. You then provide the answer for a quick check. The student with the ball stays put while the other partner moves to a new partner to restart the five-toss activity, followed by a new question or clue.

Physical Morse Code

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Invention of Morse code

Organization

Scattered in open space or standing beside desks

Equipment

None

Physical Activity

Have students hop on one foot when a dot is used and jump on two when a dash is used. Go through the entire alphabet and then have students hop or jump their names, spelling words, and so on. Use a name and a spelling word for a demonstration.

<div><div>— Jumping on two feet</div><div>● Hopping on one foot</div></div>				
A ● —	B — ● ● ●	C — ● — ●	D — ● ●	E ●
F ● ● — ●	G — — ●	H ● ● ● ●	I ● ●	J ● — — —
K — ● —	L ● — ● ●	M — —	N — ●	O — — —
P ● — — ●	Q — — ● —	R ● — ●	S ● ● ●	T —
U ● ● —	V ● ● ● —	W ● — —	X — ● ● —	Y — ● — —
Z — — ● ●				

Content Modifications

Do a call-and-respond activity about opposites. For example, one group hops or jumps the word *up* and the opposing line hops or jumps the word *down*.

Finding Our Way

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Cardinal and intermediate directions

Organization

Scattered in a multipurpose room or outdoors

Equipment

None

Physical Activity

Designate north, south, east, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest.

- Start by pointing in a specific direction and giving the students a task, such as walking to the north or skipping to the southwest.
- After a few turns, do not point—just provide commands.
- Vary the locomotor patterns (walk, jog, skip, gallop, hop jump, and so on), levels (high, medium, low), direction of travel (forward, backward, sideways), and pathways (straight, zigzag, and curvy).

What Is the Shape of the State?

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

States and capitals

Organization

Outdoor space or open indoor space and groups of seven or eight students

Equipment

Long rope or yarn per group

Physical Activity

To begin the activity, ask groups to use rope or yarn to outline the shape of a particular state.

- Have each group travel around their state using their choice of locomotor pattern.
- Have one person stand at the location of the capital city.
- Have groups visit other groups' states, guess the state and name the capital, and then travel around that state.
- Focus the activity on a specific region of study.

Another activity would be for groups of students to work together and make the shape of the state with their bodies instead of using rope.

Pass a Law

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Government balance of power

Organization

Outdoor space or large open space in the classroom or multipurpose room; groups of seven to nine students

Equipment

One hoop per group, placed in the center of the playing area, and markers for boundaries

Physical Activity

For each small-group game, one person is chosen as the president and stands in the hoop (U.S. Capitol). The other students in the group are divided equally into the Senate and the House of Representatives and stand at opposite ends of the playing field. On the signal “go,” a Senate member must connect with a House member and the two join hands. Joining means that they have developed a bill and then must work cooperatively to “catch” the president. The game is a fast walking tag game. As soon as a pair tags the president, the bill becomes a law. A new president is chosen, and the game begins again.

Washington Crosses the Delaware

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

George Washington

Organization

Outdoor space or open indoor space. One third of the class is on the “shore” in partners or groups of three, connected with their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. The others are scattered in the “Delaware River” in groups of three or four, with hands joined to represent several large chunks of ice.

Equipment

Markers to denote each side of the Delaware River

Physical Activity

The students on the shore are soldiers in a boat who will try to “row” across the Delaware River without becoming disconnected from one another or coming in contact with the large chunks of ice. The chunks of ice are trying to stop the soldiers. If a boat makes contact with an ice chunk, it is sunk. The object is to successfully cross the river. Have students change roles so everyone has a turn at being a soldier.

Get Along, Little Doggie

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Cowboys driving cattle, the Chisholm Trail from Texas to Kansas

Organization

This activity uses an outdoor space or multipurpose room. The playing area is at least 50 by 50 yards (about 45 by 45 meters). Eight students are cowboys or cowgirls, and all others are the cattle. All start at one end of the playing field. The object is to herd the cattle to the other end, losing as few strays as possible. The eight are given the following roles: one is trail boss (front center); two are points (one right front and one left front; two are swings (one covers the right side of the herd and one covers the left); two are flanks (rear right and rear left); and one is the drag (rear center).

Equipment

Markers to denote boundaries

Physical Activity

The cowboys and cowgirls are to attempt to drive the herd from the start line to the finish line. The game starts with all cattle together in the center of the start area. The cowboys and cowgirls take their assigned positions. On the signal "go," the cattle start walking forward. They try to escape without being tagged. If tagged, a cow must go to the center of the herd and moo loudly three times before attempting to escape again. A cow that is successful in running out of bounds without being tagged is safe. However, a cow may elect to come back in and taunt the cowboys and cowgirls in hopes of allowing others a chance to escape. Once a cow elects to come back in, it can be tagged. The cattle cannot stand still. They must be walking forward or trying to escape. The flank players can tag any slow movers, making them go to the middle and moo. Once the cattle have crossed the line, choose new cowboys and cowgirls and start the game again.

Time Travels

Subject

Social studies

Lesson Focus

Transportation

Organization

Outdoor space or open indoor space

Equipment

None

Physical Activity

Students are told the history of travel and asked to act out the motions.

- American Indians used their feet as the main way of travel. Pretend you are Indians as I tell you about the ways they moved. Sometimes they walked fast, other times slow. Sometimes they took long steps and other times short steps. They often had to sneak up on animals or stomp hard to scare animals.
- The Pilgrims came over on ships. Pretend you are the wind blowing the sails. Wave your arms side to side.
- Horseback riding was common with some Indians and with Paul Revere when he once saved the day. Pretend to gallop on your horse. Now, make your horse take high steps and trot.
- Wagons rolled across the plains. Make a group of four and pretend two are the horses and the other two are in the wagon. Back two, place your hands on the horses' shoulders. Wagons often joined together and formed wagon trains. Form a line and follow each other around the room.
- A long time later, bicycles became popular. Lie on the floor, grab the handlebars, raise your legs, and pedal.
- After cars were invented, people used horses and bicycles less. Drive your car quickly around the playing area.
- Finally, airplanes were invented. Pretend to fly as if you were an airplane soaring through the sky.

Content Modifications

Depending on the content standards, much more information can be embedded in this lesson.