

Using Technology in the Elementary Classroom

By Marilyn Western

Maps to Go.

This month's article will give you mapping resources as well as online and off-line projects to enhance your Social Studies curriculum. Happy mapping!

Geography Projects

ePals projects <http://www.epals.com/>

Free membership will get you in touch with students and teachers in 191 countries! You'll find a Projects section under Teaching with ePals. Select the appropriate age level of your students and browse through projects such as All About My New Friend, If I Were a..., The Cinderella Project, and Weather Watch to name a few. Keep that world map out and handy and track your partner classrooms.

Flat Stanley project <http://www.enoreo.on.ca/flatstanley/>

Based on the book by Jeff Brown, your students can their Flat Stanley via snail mail or email to another class. A journal is kept of his adventures there, he is returned, and can be sent out to another class. Keeping track of his adventures on a US map brings far away places a little closer to home. Students are encouraged to share local weather, latitude and longitude, population, and seasonal activities. Great for collecting more data! Lots of information and samples of letters from past years. Free sign up. Send Stanley all over the world, and receive Stanleys from far away places.

In-Class projects

Story mapping Use a story with interesting setting, such as The Three Little Pigs or Little Red Riding Hood. Students can draw maps of Pigsville or Grandma's Back 40, including major plot props (houses of straw or flowers along the road).

King of all you survey Use a drawing program like Kid Pix to create imaginary maps. Each student can create their own 'land' and name it, such as Jason Island or Heatherland. Give students a list of required elements: roads, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, etc. Include compass, key, and symbols. Print and post!

Real Time maps

The Living Earth: Earth Viewer <http://www.fourmilab.ch/cgi-bin/uncgi/Earth/action?opt=-p>

This site has a fantastic view of earth with the current day/night demarcation. You can view the Earth as if you were standing on the Sun, the Moon, or on a satellite on the night side of the Earth. You can choose any location on the planet by its latitude, longitude and altitude. You also choose the image: the whole earth, a topographical map, cloud cover or current weather and images of the earth and its weather. Click on the image and get a close up of the area. Very cool!

TerraServer <http://terraserver.com/>

Best viewed in Internet Explorer, this series of aerial photos will allow you to zoom right down to see individual buildings. I started with a view of Detroit from .01 of a mile above the city and zoomed to .08 of a mile – could see the Renaissance Towers and a boat on the river!

IRIS Seismic Monitor <http://www.iris.edu/seismon/>

Want to see where on earth there are earthquakes right now?? This near real-time map shows epicenters within the last 24 hours in red, orange circles were within the last 48 hours. The size of the circles indicates the magnitude of the quake. Information on these quakes stays on the site for 5 years, so you can see the edges of the tectonic plates. Click on an area for a close up view. Great for reading a key, interpreting information, and getting answers to those Why questions.

Weather Underground <http://www.wunderground.com/> or **The Weather Channel** <http://www.weather.com>

Type in your zip code and stand back – there's a lot of info here about your area. You'll find local & regional radar, temperature, humidity, wind, clouds, sun and moon rise and set times (great data for graphing), even the forecast for the next week.

A neat project is to save a series of maps – track a hurricane for a week by right clicking (Macs – hold your click) on the map each day, and select Save Image As. After a week, put each image into PowerPoint or Kid Pix and create a slide show. By making the transitions fairly fast, you'll see the storm move across the territory.

Printable maps

abcTeachNetwork <http://abcteach.com/directory/researchreports/maps/>

Nice and simple maps of world, continents, countries, and states

Outline Maps from EduPlace <http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/>

Pdf files outlines (with and without labels) of world, hemispheres, countries, US and regions, and US historical maps.

MegaMaps <http://www.yourchildlearns.com/megamaps.htm>

Free download allows you to print world and US maps in various sizes from one sheet of paper to 8 by 8 pieces of paper (over 70 across!)

MapQuest <http://www.mapquest.com/atlas/>

Select Driving Directions and plug in your school address and a student's home address and see what you come up with! Is this the best possible route home? How would you get from your house to your friend's house?

Choose someplace that you'd like to go on vacation – how long would it take you to get there, how far is it, and can you find a shorter or faster route? Lots of ways to explore place to place mapping.

Interactive mapping

Color the World <http://rainbow.ldeo.columbia.edu/exhibits/worldcolor/>

Choose your own colors for showing the world's heights and depths on a world topographical map. It starts out completely white and each time you add color, you'll see where in the world that particular height/depth happens to be. Keep adding color till the world is complete!

Maps That Teach <http://www.yourchildlearns.com/geography.htm>

Several different types of maps at this site: 1. Interactive maps for continents and major regions. Hold your mouse over the country or state and see its capital. 2. Map puzzles for countries and states. Place the country or state in the correct place – really emphasizes places in relation to others.

Xpedition Hall <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/hall/>

Brought to you by the National Geographic Society, this site is pure quality. Plan on spending quite a bit of time exploring this site – and give the kids just as much time! You'll cover all the geographic standards here – plus ones you didn't know you could teach. From maps to viewing the Earth from outer space (my favorite – take a journey from the among the stars by clicking the zoom in button and end up seeing the National Geographic building in Washington DC. Very cool stuff! Other examples... Explore the difference between a Mercator, Robinson, and Polar view of the earth. Combine with a simple outline map of the continents, the living earth, political and physical maps. The Mental Mapper compares a kids version of mapping a room, a route, and the world with an adult's version. World Viewer allows a student to compare different kinds of data – from languages, population growth, religion, hours of sunshine, and more. Do check out the Teacher's Guide for ideas on exactly how to use this site with your students.

MapMachine <http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/>

Another great tool from National Geographic. There are world, US, street, atlas, historical maps as well as flags and facts. You can email, save, customize, and print these maps. Just click and zoom or type in a search.

Data Collecting

InfoNation <http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp>

Select up to 5 countries to compare population, population density, largest city, economy, environment, health, and technology. Good data for creating bar graphs.

CIA World Fact Book <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

Years of data collection by the CIA is now open to students. Find information about a country's geography, people, government, economy, communications, transportation, and military. Compare countries or find out more about countries in the news.

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