Communities, do we need them?

Big Question Social Studies Unit
By Jess Wacek
Title: Communities, do we need them?

Level: Grade 3

Estimated Time Required: Five lessons—approximately 15 days

Rationale and Overview: This unit looks at the structure of communities and why they are preferred by most citizens. The unit allows for students to examine the structure of the community that they live in as well as our country as a larger community. Furthermore, the unit takes the students’ individual environments into consideration and challenges them to think about how even the most immediate surroundings, such as home and school, follow similar community structures as the larger community.

The unit is worth teaching, for it incorporates a selection of activities that are personalized and meaningful to the students. Some of the activities included within the unit are as follows:

- Field trip
- Guest speaker
- Presentations
- Visual arts
- Language arts

The lessons that are included in the unit allow students to work cooperatively as well as participate in lessons that are engaging and encourage student inquiry. The unit includes activities and presentations that promote positive classroom community, as well as teamwork and cooperation.

National Standards:
- NCSS VI: Power, Authority, and Governance

State Standards:
- Government and Citizenship—Civic Values, Skills, Rights and Responsibilities—Importance of Participation in Civic Life

Local Standards:
- Citizenship/Government—Recognize various levels of government: national, state, tribal, city
- Citizenship/Government—Understand the voting process in Minnesota
Overall Goals:
1. The student will understand the importance of participation in civic life and demonstrate effective civic skills.
2. The student will know basic functions of government.
3. The student will understand the interconnected workings of his/her community.

Specific Objectives:
• The student will recognize the various levels of government: national, state, tribal, and city.
• The student will understand the voting process.
• The student will identify qualities of a leader.
• The student will understand the interdependence of communities.
• The student will interpret and evaluate the laws and the purpose of laws/rules.
• The student will explore a community role through job shadowing.

Inquiry Questions:
What makes up our community?
What are the components?
How are guidelines set? Enforced?
Who decides what is acceptable?
How does everyone contribute to the community?
Could you live all alone? Would it be difficult?
What would you need to survive on your own?
Who runs your community? State? Country?
What qualities do those leaders have?

Resources:
Communities: Adventures in Time and Place textbook
Cardstock
Markers, colored pencils, crayons
Computers with Internet capabilities
Guest speaker
Field trip
Bulletin board
Poster board
Leader form
String
Lined paper
White computer paper
A is for Abigail: An Almanac of Amazing American Women by Lynne Cheney
Amelia to Zora: Twenty-Six Women Who Changed the World by Cynthia Chin-Lee
Pontiac, Young Ottawa Leader by Howard Henry Peckham
Forgiveness: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi by Mary Logue
Boys Who Rocked the World: From King Tut to Tiger Woods by the editors of Beyond Words Publishing
Sitting Bull: Sioux Leader by Steven Bodow
The President: America’s Leader by Mary Oates Johnson
(Other books that can be used to research leaders are also helpful)
**Student Assessment Plan:**

**Lesson 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-Beginning</th>
<th>2-Developing</th>
<th>3-Accomplished</th>
<th>4-Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index Card</strong></td>
<td>Two, one, or none of the five pieces of information have been recorded.</td>
<td>Three of the five pieces of information have been recorded.</td>
<td>Four of the five pieces of information have been recorded.</td>
<td>All five pieces of information have been recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illustration/Symbol</strong></td>
<td>Illustration is incomplete or lacks any kind of representation of the assigned role in the community.</td>
<td>Illustration is complete, but does not convey a representation of the role in the community and/or shows poor effort.</td>
<td>Illustration is complete, conveys a representation of the role in the community, and is neat and colorfully presented.</td>
<td>Illustrations are complete, convey a strong representation, and are neat and colorfully presented in a creative way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>Presentation not given.</td>
<td>Gives little information, delivery is short with long pauses, poor eye contact, etc.</td>
<td>Gives adequate information, generally good delivery, and appropriate eye contact, voice, etc.</td>
<td>Much information given, confident delivery and excellent style. Great eye contact and well spoken (grammar, volume, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson 2:**

- **Government Levels**
The depictions of the level of government need to neat, colorful, easy to read, and show an understanding of the four basic levels of government. The illustration should include the four levels of government: national, state, tribal, and city. The levels of government need to be in the correct order based on authority.

**Score 5….4….3….2….1**

- **Rules**
The writing needs to neat, easy to read, and on parchment paper. There must be at least five rules that pertain how a community is run and the rules need to show an understanding of community governance.

**Score 5….4…..3….2….1**
Lesson 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader Form</th>
<th>1-Beginning</th>
<th>2-Developing</th>
<th>3-Accomplished</th>
<th>4-Exemplary</th>
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<td>All five pieces of information have been recorded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summit/Presentation</td>
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<td>Gives little information, delivery is short with long pauses, poor eye contact, etc.</td>
<td>Gives adequate information, generally good delivery, and appropriate eye contact, voice, etc.</td>
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Lesson 4:

Job Shadow/Interview Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation/ Attitude/ Teamwork</th>
<th>1-Beginning</th>
<th>2-Developing</th>
<th>3-Accomplished</th>
<th>4-Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Two, one, or none of the five pieces of information have been included.</td>
<td>Three of the five pieces of information have been included.</td>
<td>Four of the five pieces of information have been included.</td>
<td>All five pieces of information have been included.</td>
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Lesson 5:

• Essay
The essay addresses the question, *Communities, Do We Need Them?* The essay is at least one page long. It includes a topic sentence, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The essay includes information that has been learned throughout the activities, guest speakers, field trips, Internet research and discussions. The essay flows well and highlights the student’s voice.

Score 5....4....3....2....1

• Concept Map
The concept map is neat and easy to read. It has at least five points or location of people or places within the community that are found on the diagram in the classroom. It demonstrates the students understanding of how people within a community are dependent. The connecting lines are clear and labeled.

Score 5....4....3....2....1
Lesson 1: What is a Community?
Duration: 3 days

Introduction
• Students will gather on the carpeted meeting area. Ask students:
  1. What is a community?
  2. Does everyone benefit from the community?
  3. What types of people do we need in our community?
• Using student answers as a guide for discussion make a list of members that are important
to the functioning of a community. Tell them that communities are places where people live,
work, and have fun together. It is usually made up of several different neighborhoods.
• Discuss the role of citizens within the community:
  1. What is a citizen?
  2. How do citizens contribute to the community?
  3. How do you contribute to the community?
• Tell students that a citizen is a member of community or country. Communities need
citizens to work together to solve problems. Encourage students to add to this definition of
citizen.

Learning Activities
• Using the list of community members that are essential to a functioning community ask
students to work in pairs and research a career/role found within our community.
• Each pair will use Internet capable computers as well as sources found within the library to
explore their chosen role within the community. Research should include information about
the primary responsibilities of the citizen, why it is important to the community and a current
event from this field of work. Students will record the following information on a piece of
cardstock:
  * name of role in community
  * 3 primary responsibilities of this citizen
  * 1 current event of from this field

Closing
• When the students have finished their research and created their card with all of the
information outlined above then the pairs will present their information to the rest of the
class.
• The class will create a large diagram of their community on one of the bulletin boards. The
pairs will create an illustration of the business or structure that might be used by the
citizen/role the pair researched. The illustrations will be posted along with their card on the
diagram of the community as accurately as possible.
Lesson 2: Who Runs My Community?
Duration: 3 days

Introduction
• Students will gather at the meeting area of the classroom. Ask students to recall the definitions of a community and a citizen. Do these citizens of the community always get along? How do the members of a community know their limits or boundaries?
• Have a list of the classroom rules that describe the limits and boundaries of the classroom. Ask the students if their community has rules similar to those of their classroom? How are they different?
• Where can we find the rules that we follow in our community? Why do we need these rules? Who makes these rules? Using the student discussion a guide, lead the students toward analyzing the rules that govern their classroom.
• Inform students that rules are made to inform citizens of what is an acceptable behavior within the community and specifically what is not acceptable within the community. Rules are important for a community to function or work effectively.
• Discuss the different levels of government. What is government? Government is system that provides rules and guidance for the communities we live in.

Learning Activities
• Students will work in small groups to write a list of at least five rules that they believe are most important for the community to run effectively. The groups will make a rough draft of their rules and once they have been proofed they will recopy them on parchment paper so they can be posted next to the diagram on the bulletin board.
• A field trip to the government center of the community is planned and will allow students to see where many of the rules are made. Students will be given an opportunity to ask the mayor or city council members about the rules that are put in place and why they have made certain rules. Students will also be informed about other levels of government. The guest speaker will be prompted to share information related to the levels of government: national, state, tribal and city.
• Following the field trip the class will discuss their findings and record observations that the students found as they toured the government center and talked with the mayor and/or city council members. These observations may include why specific rules were made or the process that was taken to create a rule.

Closing
• Students will work in groups to create an illustration that shows the different levels of government. These illustrations should include the four key levels that were presented during the field trip. National, state, tribe, and city should be presented on all of the posters in a manner chosen by the group. These portrayals will be displayed around the bulletin board of our community.
Lesson 3: Leaders
Duration: 3 days

Introduction
• Students will gather at the meeting area of the classroom. What is a leader? Do we have leaders in our community? Who are they? Are there other leaders that guide our community? Is the President a leader?
• Let the student discussion guide the beginning of the lesson and direct the discussion through the leaders of the levels of government, which the students learned about previously.
• Do leaders have specific qualities? What are these qualities? How do we know that people have these qualities? The principal of the school will join the class at the meeting area and discuss what being a leader means to him/her. The students will be given time to ask questions about leadership.

Learning Activities
• Students will individually research a current or past leader from the list of leaders that was the class brainstorms. The students will use resources found in their library and classroom which may include books, newspapers, encyclopedias, and internet.
• The students will be given a form which will guide their research. The form asks students to find specific information about each leader as well as explore something about the leader that they find interesting.
• Once students have found the information about their leader they will type up the information found. Students will be given time to type up their information during computer class. When students have their information together the students will come together for a leader discussion/summit. Students will be encouraged to dress the part of their leader but it is not required. The class will share with each other the information that they found about their leader and discuss the importance of leaders.

Closing
• Students will turn in their typed information about their leader and they will be posted within the classroom. To finish off the lesson on leaders the students will create an illustration of their leader to post next to the information they have found. The collage of leaders will be placed within the classroom for the students to remember their exploration of leaders.
Leader
One who leads or guides; one who has influence of power

My leader is ________________________________.

Primary Leadership Role:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________.

Accomplishment:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________.

Challenge:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________.

Interesting Fact:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________.
Lesson 4: Community Interdependence  
Duration: 5-6 days

Introduction
- The class will gather on the carpet meeting area of the room. The discussion will lead students to see the interconnected workings of the community. Does a community need many different people? What types of jobs/careers are needed? Grocer? Banker? Lawyer? Policemen? Firemen? Teacher? Mayor? How do these people work together? Does the community need all of them? The discussion will continue based on student ideas and participation.

Learning Activities
- Students will return to their desks. The class will create a list of people/jobs within their community. The teacher will pick three or four different positions that can be found within the community. Students will take part in a job shadow/interview of a community member with one of the brainstormed jobs within the community. The class will work in cooperative groups for this task.
- The teacher will need to make arrangements for the class to take part in the job shadow/interview. Depending upon the situation students may be able to travel to meet the community member or the person may come to the school to meet with the students. The class will compose a list of 5 or 6 questions that describe the many responsibilities of the person as well as how they are interdependent upon other places and people in the community. The groups will interview the community member about the required information as well as other information they feel may be important or interesting.
- Students will word process a description that includes the information they gathered from the interview/job shadow. The word processing will be done during their computer time.
- After the job shadow the groups will create an illustration that represents the job/position of the person they interviewed. These will be posted on our community board which also includes other people/places in the community. The information collected will also be posted near the illustration.

Closing
- The class will share their findings from the interview/job shadow. The class will discuss how members in the community are interdependent. What does interdependent mean? Why do we need grocers and bankers and policemen? Can we live without certain members or do we always need some? Who can we not live without? Why? The teacher will connect people/places on our community board using string based on the student discussion about who is dependent upon whom.
Lesson 5: Communities, Do We Need Them?
Duration: 3 days

Introduction
• The students will gather at the meeting area to begin the lesson. The class will discuss the past lessons that have provided them with information about their community and how it works. The students will discuss the purpose of communities as well as if they are needed. Students will use the information they have gathered and displayed around the room to help them decide whether communities are needed and why or why not they believe so.

Learning Activities
• Students will individually on an essay that will answer the question, Communities, Do We Need Them? The essay will be at least one page long. Students will use their understanding of communities and the role of people within the community to discuss why or why not they are needed. Students will form an opinion and support their opinion based on what they have learned. The students may use the diagram of their community and postings on the wall as a reference for their essay.
• Students will also work individually to create a concept map that shows connections between at least five of the people/roles in a community. Students will create a neat and easy to read map that has clear connections that are labeled.

Closing
• Students will turn in their essay and concept map. Students will share their work in small groups. The small groups will discuss their answers and ideas to the question and then the class as a whole will discuss the student’s response to the question. The class will come to a conclusion on whether or not communities are needed and why.