

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM REPORT
2010-2011**

Keywords (for database searching)

Grade 2 Social Studies, geography, mapping skills

Contact Information

Name	School	Grade Level or Subject
Katie Williams	Burbank	Grade 2
Karen Curran	Burbank	Grade 2
Jamie Huguet	Burbank	Grade 2
Nik Von Huene	Burbank	Grade 2, LTS

Guiding Theme

Integrated, real life experiences

Inquiry Question

How do we structure our geography instruction in regards to our units on Belmont, Alaska and Kenya in order for children to be able to describe how maps depict geographical information in different ways, read map symbols and identify cardinal direction?

Process

We focused on our inquiry question as it related to our instruction during our three social studies units on Belmont, Alaska and Kenya. The basic process and format for each of the three units is as follows:

1. Design pre-assessment (and post assessment) for each skill we were focusing on. During Belmont, we focused on using coordinates on a grid and cardinal direction. During Alaska we focused on identifying land forms and geographical features using a map key, and during Kenya we focused on a culmination of the skills previously mentioned as well as students' geographical knowledge.
2. Designed and conducted various lessons throughout each unit to try to reach our goals. We discussed these lessons and their implementation as well as potential changes after each lesson was taught.
3. Administered post-assessment, collected our data and discussed our results.
4. Put together a fully organized and comprehensive binder of all lessons/learning materials and teacher resources for each of the three social studies units to be used in following years.

Findings

We felt that our PLT project this year was incredibly beneficial and productive. Prior to beginning this project, we found through informal observations and anecdotal reports from third grade teachers that there was a gap in students ability to describe how maps depict geographical information in different ways, in their ability to read and use map symbols as well as their ability to identify and use cardinal directions. Through the design and implementation of our pre-assessments, we were able to collect data that confirmed our thoughts about the lack of focused instruction on these skills in our social studies curriculum. Our Belmont pre-assessment, which assessed student knowledge of map symbols, we found that out of 68 second graders, 58 students scored 0-2 correct of the 6 questions that were asked. 6 students were able to answer 3-4 questions correctly and 4 students were able to answer 5-6 questions accurately. After providing direct instruction and providing students with multiple lessons that were focused on map skills, our post assessment showed that out of 68 second graders, 3 students were able to answer 0-2 questions correctly, 6 students answered 3-4 questions correctly and an

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overwhelming 67 students were able to answer 5-6 questions accurately. We felt confident that we had reached our goal for our Belmont and Communities unit; children were able to identify map symbols accurately. We followed a similar structure in our identifying and planning assessments and instruction for our Alaska unit. For our Alaska unit, we administered a pre-assessment asking students to identify 8 land forms. We found that out of the 66 second graders who completed the pre-assessment, 57 students identified 0-2 landforms correctly, 6 students identified 3-5 landforms correctly and 4 students identified 6-8 landforms correctly. Again, this confirmed our belief that second graders would benefit from additional instruction in this area. After teaching students about various landforms, we administered our post-assessment. Out of 66 second graders, 3 students identified 0-2 landforms correctly, 6 students identified 3-5 landforms correctly and 57 children were able to accurately identify 6-8 landforms correctly. Our results for both units, on Belmont and Alaska were very positive! We are currently teaching students about Kenya and we have only administered our pre-assessments to gauge student knowledge of geographical features. Our results on this pre-assessment was interesting as we found that out of 66 second graders, 2 students answered 0-2 questions correctly, 29 students were able to identify 2-4 of the geographical features correctly and 35 students answered 5-7 questions correctly. What we gleaned from this data is that students were using their prior knowledge and were applying it to the new skill of identifying geographical features. While this was not the data we expected, it still gave us very useful information as we move forward in our teaching.

Recommendations / Next Steps

- * Continue to utilize materials that were designed as a regular part of our social studies curriculum in following years.
- * A possible next step could be to follow this model to design and implement additional assessments and lessons in Social Studies to focus our instruction on other concepts where we feel we are lacking - ie/government.