Facts to Know

Suggested group size: three to four children per adult volunteer

Time frame: group meeting 30 to 60 minutes

Recommended ages: 5- to 7-year-olds (kindergarten through second grade)

Materials:
- Balloons (size: 8 to 12 inch)
- Continent cut-outs
- Paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Markers
- Compass (or smartphone compass app)
- World map or globe
- Neighborhood or community map (often found in phone books)
- Snack mix (each ingredient in a separate bag)
Background Knowledge

Geography is a wide subject. Geographers study the land and the people living there. Geography is split into two main fields of study: human geography and physical geography. Geospatial information is the collection of human and physical information about a place.

A map of your community might show houses, stores, streets and parks. This map shows the physical information about your community. The number of people living in your community, their ages and the kind of home they live in are examples of human information.

The physical and human information can be layered to create a detailed picture about a community. This geospatial information helps us understand complex questions, such as where to build new schools and roads, and how quickly our community is growing or shrinking.

Geospatial information has changed the way we solve problems and helps scientists understand global change. Geospatial apps such as Google Earth and technology such as hand-held global positioning system (GPS) and smartphones have become part of our daily lives. Answering questions such as “Where am I?” or “Where are they?” can be done with just one click.

Learning Activities

Do: Getting Started

Earth Balloons (10 minutes)

1. What shape is the Earth? Discuss how we know this: space travel, photographs, scientific measurement.
2. Cut out the continent shapes. [Handout included]
3. Inflate a balloon; this represents the Earth.
4. By memory, or using a map of the globe, tape each continent to the surface of your Earth Balloon. Try to place each continent as close to the actual location as you can.
5. Now label the oceans using a marker. An adult may need to help.
6. Whose Earth Balloon looks the most like the real Earth?

(What is Geospatial? 2012)
1. Lead members on a scavenger hunt for ingredients to a snack mix treat.

2. Prior to the meeting, hide each ingredient of a snack mix in a separate location. Prepare clues for each ingredient leading to the next. Clues should use cardinal directions and number of steps to describe the location of the next ingredient. Example: The raisins are 20 steps to the west and 15 steps south of the peanuts.

3. Using a compass, members can start with the first clue in the scavenger hunt to find the first ingredient to their mix.

4. Members follow each additional clue as they find them, collecting all the needed ingredients for the snack mix.

5. Prepare the snack mix once all the ingredients have been found. Enjoy!

(Explore Cardinal Directions, 2012)
Reflect/Apply

Reflect: Bringing Closure

Birds-eye View (30 minutes)

1. Discuss the different places and things that are around the building, such as trees, playgrounds, streets, stores and homes.

2. Introduce a map of the local neighborhood or building. Discuss the information that can be found on a map. Objects on a map are represented using symbols. Maps use a key to explain the meaning of each of the symbols on the map. The key usually shows a small picture of each of the symbols used on the map, along with a written description of the meaning.

3. Ask members to think about the places and things around their home or in their yard, such as lawn sheds, swing sets, streets, fire hydrants and even trees.

4. Ask members to design a map of their own yard, or if they live in an apartment building, a map of the apartment’s yard. Distribute one sheet of large white paper and markers to each child. Ask them to draw their home in the center of the map. Next, they can draw the surrounding streets, swing sets, buildings and trees.

5. Tell them that each map should have a key to explain their map’s symbols. Encourage the members to use creative symbols to represent the buildings, trees and objects in their yards. Remind the students to include these symbols in their map key.

(A Bird’s Eye View of my Neighborhood! 2012)

Apply: Going Beyond

1. Using a globe or map, have members point out where they are standing. Do members have friends or relatives who live in another state or country? Find their locations on the globe or map. Have members vacationed in another state or country? Using yarn, measure the distance between your hometown and that vacation spot.

2. Create cardinal direction labels for the walls in a member’s bedroom. At home, members use a compass to find the north, south, east and west walls. Members place their labels on those walls. Now, members create a map of their room; don’t forget to include a key for all the symbols on the map!

3. Play compass tag. Divide a group into four teams, one for each direction: north, south, east and west. The compass (person who is “it”) must run a distance away and stand in one spot. Pretend that the compass person’s face always is facing north. The four teams, at the word go, must run and stand in the correct location, depending how the compass is facing. The north team always must stand in front of the compass, the east team to the compass’s right, the west team to the compass’s left and the south team behind the compass. The first team with all members standing still in the correct location wins.

(A Bird’s Eye View of my Neighborhood! 2012)